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TOM TEMPLE'S CAREER

By HORATIO ALGER, JR.

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"Tom Turner's Legacy," "The Train Boy,"
"Ben Bruce," Etc.



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TOM TEMPLE'S CAREER.

CHAPTER I.

NATHAN MIDDLETON.



N THE main street, in the town of Plympton, stood a two-story house, with a narrow lawn in front. It had a stiff, staid look of decorum, as if no children were ever allowed to create disorder within its precincts, or interfere with its settled regularity. It appeared to be a place of business as well as a residence, for there was a thin plate on one side of the front door, bearing the name of

NATHAN MIDDLETON,
INSURANCE AGENT.

Some people might object to turning even a part of their dwellings into a business office, but then it saved rent, and Mr. Middleton was one of the saving kind. He had always been saving from the first time he received a penny at the mature age of five, and triumphing over the delusive pleasures of an investment in candy, put it in a tin savings-bank to the present moment. He didn't marry until the age of forty, not having dared to undertake the expense of maintaining two persons. At that

time, however, he fortunately encountered a maiden lady of about his own age, whose habits were equally economical, who possessed the sum of four thousand dollars. After a calculation of some length he concluded that it would be for his pecuniary benefit to marry. He proposed, was accepted, and in due time Miss Corinthia Carver became Mrs. Nathan Middleton.

Their married life had lasted eight years, when they very unexpectedly became the custodian of my hero.

One day Mr. Middleton sat in his office, drawing up an application for insurance, when a stranger entered.

"Wants to insure his life, I hope," thought Nathan, in the hope of a commission.

"Take a chair, sir. What can I do for you?" he asked urbanely. "Have you been thinking of insuring your life? I represent some of the best companies in the country."

"That isn't my business," said the visitor decisively.

Nathan looked disappointed, and waited for the business to be announced.

"You had a school-mate named Stephen Temple, did you not, Mr. Middleton?"

"Yes; we used to go to school together. What has become of him?"

"He is dead."

"I am sorry to hear it. Any family?"

"One son, a boy of sixteen. That is why I am here."

"Really, I don't understand you."

"He has left his son to you," said the stranger.

"What!" exclaimed Nathan, in dismay.

"Having no other friends, for he has been away from

home nearly all his life, he thought you would be willing to give the boy a home."

Instantly there rose in the economical mind of Mr. Middleton an appalling array of expenses, including board, washing, clothes, books and so on, which would be likely to be incurred on behalf of a well-grown boy, and he actually shuddered.

"Stephen Temple had no right to expect such a thing of me," he said. "The fact that we went to school together doesn't give him any claim upon me. If the boy hasn't got any relations willing to support him he should be sent to the poor-house."

The visitor laughed heartily, much to Nathan Middleton's bewilderment.

"I don't see what I have said that is so very amusing," he said stiffly.

"You talk of a boy worth forty thousand dollars going to the poor-house!"

"What!" exclaimed Nathan, in open-eyed wonder.

"As his father directs that his guardian shall receive a thousand dollars a year for his care, most persons would not refuse so hastily."

"My dear sir!" said Nathan persuasively, feeling as if he had suddenly discovered a gold mine, "is this really true?"

"I can show you a copy of the will, if you are in doubt."

"I believe you implicitly, my dear sir; and so poor Stephen is dead!" and the insurance agent took out his handkerchief and placed it before his eyes to wipe away

the imaginary tears. "We were *very* intimate when we were boys—like brothers, in fact. Excuse my tears, I shall soon recover the momentary shock of your sad announcement."

"I hope so," said the visitor dryly. "As you are not willing to take the boy, I will look elsewhere."

"My dear sir," hastily exclaimed Nathan, alarmed at the prospect of losing a thousand dollars a year, "you are quite mistaken. I have not refused."

"You suggested his being cared for by some relative."

"It was a misapprehension, I assure you. I will gladly receive my poor friend's son into my happy home circle. I will be his second father. I have no sons of my own. I will lavish upon him the tenderness of a parent."

The visitor laughed shortly.

"I am afraid you have very little idea of what Tom Temple is."

"He is the son of my early friend."

"That may be, but that don't make him a model, or a very desirable boarder."

"Is he a bad boy?"

"He is known among us as 'The Bully of the Village.' He is fond of teasing and domineering over other boys, and is full of mischief. He is sure to give you trouble."

"I'd rather he was a good boy," thought Nathan, "but a thousand dollars will make up for a good deal of trouble."

"Does my description frighten you?" said the visitor.

"No," said Nathan. "Out of regard for the lamented friend of my early days, I will receive this misguided boy, and try to correct his faults and make him steady and well-behaved."

"You'll find it a hard job, my friend."

"I shall have the co-operation of Mrs. Middleton, an admirable lady, whose precepts and example will have a most salutary effect upon my young charge."

"Well, I hope so, for your sake. When shall I send Tom to you?"

"As soon as you like," said Nathan, who desired that the allowance of twenty dollars a week should commence at once. "To whom am I to send my bills?"

"To me. I am a lawyer, and the executor of Mr. Temple's will."

"I wonder this lawyer didn't try to secure the thousand dollars a year for himself," thought Nathan, and he inwardly rejoiced that he had not done so.

"Am I expected to provide the boy's clothes?" he asked anxiously, the thought suddenly occurring to him. "Is that to come out of the thousand dollars?"

"No; not at all. You will furnish the clothes, however, and send the bills to me. Here is my card."

"I believe my business is at an end," he said rising; "at least for the present. The boy will be forwarded at once. He will probably present himself to you day after to-morrow."

The card which he placed in the hand of Nathan contained the name of

EPHRAIM SHARP,
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW,
CENTERVILLE.

"Very well, Mr. Sharp. We will be ready to receive him. Good-morning, sir."

"Good-morning, Mr. Middleton. I hope you will not repent your decision."

"That isn't likely," said Nathan to himself gleefully, when he was left alone. "A thousand dollars a year, and the boy's board won't probably cost me more'n a hundred. We don't pamper ourselves with luxurious living. It is wrong. Besides, it is wasteful. I must go and acquaint Mrs. Middleton with the news."

"Corinthia, my dear, we are about to have a boarder," he said, on reaching the presence of his fair partner.

Corinthia's eyes flashed, not altogether amiably.

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Middleton, you have agreed to take a boarder without consulting me?"

"I knew you would consent, my dear."

"How did you know?"

"You would be crazy to refuse a boarder that is to pay a thousand dollars a year."

"What!" ejaculated the lady incredulously.

"Listen, and I'll tell you all about it."

He told the story, winding up with:

"Now wasn't it right to say 'yes?'"

"How much of this money am I going to receive?" asked his wife abruptly.

Mr. Middleton was taken aback.

"What do you mean, my dear?"

"What I say. Do you expect me to have the care of a boy—I always hated boys—and all for *your* benefit?"

"We two are one, my dear."

"Not in money matters. I repeat it. I won't take him unless you give me three hundred dollars of the money every year for my own use."

Mr. Middleton didn't like it, but he was finally compelled to give in. After all, it would leave him seven hundred, and at least five hundred would be clear profit.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCES TOM TEMPLE.



HE STAGE stopped in front of the Plympton Hotel two days afterward. There were several inside passengers, but with these we have nothing to do. Beside the driver sat a stout boy, with a keen, expressive face, who looked full of life and activity.

"Here you are," said the driver, with a final flourish of the whip.

"I see that, old chap," said the boy; "but I don't stop here."

"Where are you goin' to put up?"

"The man's name is Middleton. He is to have the honor of feeding and lodging me for the present."

"I suppose you mean Nathan Middleton. I don't envy you. He keeps the meanest table in town."

"Does he? Then I shall take the liberty to reform his table."

"I don't believe you can do it. There's only one person in town meaner than old Middleton, and that's his wife. What makes you board with them?"

"Can't help it. He went to school with my father, and he left orders in his will that I should be taken care of by Middleton. "You'll take me up there?"

"Yes; you'll have to wait till I land the mail and discharge cargo."

“All right.”

A few minutes later Tom Temple was deposited at the gate of his future guardian. Nathan Middleton hastened to welcome him with the consideration due to so wealthy a boarder.

“My dear young friend,” he begun expansively, “I am indeed glad to welcome the son of my old friend to my humble home.”

If Mr. Middleton expected Tom to reply in a similar manner, he soon realized his mistake. Our hero was not one of the gushing kind.

“All right,” he answered coolly. “Will you help me in with my trunk?”

Mr. Middleton mechanically obeyed, not seeing his way clear to any more sentiment.

Mrs. Middleton appeared in the front entry as the trunk was set down.

“Corinthia, my dear, this is the son of my deceased friend, Stephen Temple.”

Mrs. Middleton’s thin figure was clad in a thin, slazy silk of very scant pattern, and her pinched features wore an artificial smile.

“How do you do, Mr. Temple?” she said.

“I’m well, but hungry,” responded Tom readily.

“Is tea nearly ready, Corinthia?” asked her husband.

“It will be ready in fifteen minutes. If you will show Mr. Temple to his room, he won’t have long to wait.”

The two together carried up Tom’s trunk, and deposited it in a scantily furnished chamber, which it was announced he was to occupy.

"I hope, my young friend, you will like your apartment," said Nathan.

Tom looked about him critically.

"I don't see any rocking-chair," he said.

"I was not aware that rocking-chairs were considered necessary in a sleeping apartment," said Nathan, who did not fancy buying any extra furniture.

"I study in my room," said Tom, "and I need a rocking-chair to support my spine."

"I hope your spine is not affected," said Mr. Middleton, rather astonished.

"It's very weak," said Tom gravely.

"You don't look it," said Nathan, surveying the strong form of his young friend.

"Appearances are deceitful," said Tom sententiously.

"I will procure you a rocking-chair," said Mr. Middleton, sighing at the thought of the extra expense. "I will now leave you to any little preparations you may desire to make. I will call you when supper is ready."

So Tom was left alone.

Our hero sat down on the bed and reflected.

"I don't fancy the old man's looks," he thought. "He looks mean, and so does his wife. I have an idea they'll try to starve me, but if they do I'll make it lively for them, or my name isn't Tom Temple. I know, from what Sharp told me, that they are going to get a steep price for my board, and I don't want them to make too much out of me. This bed is as hard as a brick. No wonder—it's filled with straw. I suppose mattresses come too high. I see I shall have to give some lessons

to my worthy friends on the subject of keeping house. I've got plenty of money, and I don't see why I shouldn't go in for comfort. I could stand hard fare if there was any need of it, but there isn't."

Soon the feet of Mr. Middleton were heard on the stairs.

"My young friend," he said, as Tom opened the door at his gentle tap, "supper is ready."

"My old friend," said Tom promptly, "I am ready, too."

"What a very extraordinary boy!" thought Mr. Middleton. "Why should he call me old? I am older than he, to be sure, but I am not aged."

He led the way into the dining-room. Mrs. Middleton was already seated at the table. It did not look particularly inviting. There was a plate of bread, cut in thin slices, a very small plate of butter, a plate of consumptive looking gingerbread and half a dozen slices of meat about the thickness of a wafer.

"Not much chance of overeating myself here," thought Tom. "This won't do at all."

"Will you be seated, Mr. Temple," said the lady. "Shall I give you some tea?"

"Yes, ma'am."

Corinthia poured out a cup of colored liquid, into which she poured about half a teaspoonful of milk and an extremely small portion of sugar.

"Excuse me, ma'am," said Tom, "but I am not afraid of milk or sugar."

"Really!" said the lady, not quite comprehending.

"I'll put in the sugar and milk myself," said Tom, and he deliberately poured out a part of his tea into the saucer, filling up with milk, and deposited two full spoonfuls of sugar in the same.

This was wasteful extravagance in the eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Middleton.

"I never knew any one use so much sugar and milk, Mr. Temple," she said with asperity.

"You haven't any objection, have you?" he asked coolly.

"Oh, of course not," she answered bridling; "but it seems so singular."

"Does it? That's just what I thought of your way."

"Shall I help you to a slice of meat, Mr. Temple?" asked Nathan.

"You'd better give me two or three; they seem to be very small," said Tom.

Mrs. Middleton looked far from amiable as she heard this remark. Her husband contented himself with putting two of the wafers on his young friend's plate.

"We don't always have meat at supper," said his wife, fearing that Tom would expect it as a general thing, "but we suppose your journey might make you hungry."

"So it has. Mr. Middleton will you help me to more meat?" said Tom, who had already disposed of the two wafers.

Mr. and Mrs. Middleton exchanged glances of dismay.

"I think you'll have to send for more," said Tom coolly. "I'm delicate, and the doctor says I must eat plenty of meat."

"My doctor tells me meat is injurious at supper," said Mrs. Middleton, with emphasis.

"Tell him he doesn't know much. Another piece of butter, Mr. Middleton, if you please? It would kill me to go without meat."

"You don't look delicate."

"I am, though. I tried doing without meat at supper for a week, and what do you think happened?"

Mr. Middleton looked curious.

"I got up in the night—fast asleep, you know—and set the bed-clothes on fire. Came near burning up the house. All on account of not eating meat."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton alarmed.

"Do you walk in your sleep, Mr. Temple?"

"Not when I've had a hearty supper, ma'am."

"I think, Corinthia, you'd better get some meat," said her husband, who looked anxious.

"Warm meat—beefsteak, for instance—is better than cold to make me sleep," said Tom. "By the way, Mrs. Middleton, the butter is out, and so is the bread."

"I never saw so voracious a boy," said the lady to herself. "He really has an ungovernable appetite."

But she got the bread and the butter. Tom generally managed to have his way.

In justice to him I must say that he had no more appetite than is usual to a hearty, growing boy, but Mr. and Mrs. Middleton stinted themselves out of regard to economy, and to them he seemed to eat enough for six.

CHAPTER III.

TOM'S FIRST BATTLE.



AFTER supper Tom took a walk. He wanted to know something about his future home. Thus far his impressions had not been altogether agreeable.

"If the Middleton's are a fair specimen of the people of Plympton, it's a good place to emigrate from," he thought. "However, I'll stay a while and see what turns up."

Plympton was a village of moderate size. It probably contained about fifteen hundred inhabitants, beside the occupants of outlying farms, for the town was largely agricultural. Those who met our hero surveyed him with attention, for in a small country town all are acquainted, and a stranger is at once recognized as such. One old lady, Mrs. Prudence Peabody, was not content with staring at our hero. She stopped short and addressed him.

"Do you live in Plympton, young man?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Tom. "Do you?"

"I've lived here ever since I was a gal."

"Have you?" asked Tom innocently. "That must be a long time."

"I ain't so old as I might be," said the old lady sharply. "Where do you live? I never see you afore."

"It's a remarkable coincidence that *I* never set eyes on you before."

"Who be you a living with?"

"Mr. Middleton. Shall be happy to receive a call."

The old lady looked sharply at our hero, but his manner was so cool and matter-of-fact that it was impossible to tell whether he intended to be polite or was merely chaffing her.

"What's your name?" asked the old lady.

"Thomas Washington," said our hero. "Sorry I haven't a card."

"You ain't related to General Washington, be you?"

"I'm his first cousin's grandson," answered Tom, who, at any rate, did not possess the traditional love of truth which we usually associate with the name which he had so unjustifiably assumed.

"I declare! Who'd have thought it?" exclaimed Mrs. Peabody. "Be you related to the Middletons?"

"I don't think I am," said Tom hastily, for he could not tolerate such an idea even in joke.

"Be you goin' to stay long?" asked the persevering questioner.

"That depends upon my spine," said Tom gravely.

"You don't mean to say you've got the spine complaint?"

"Yes, I do."

"Did you ever try poultices?"

"Lots of 'em, but I had to give 'em up."

"Why?"

"They made me crazy."

"You don't say!" ejaculated the old lady, sheering off in some alarm.

"You needn't be afraid," said Tom gravely. "I haven't had an attack for a week."

This only alarmed Mrs. Peabody the more, and with a hasty good-night she hurried on her way, considerably bewildered by her interview.

"She's a prying old lady, and deserves to be mystified," said Tom to himself. "I'll bet a hat she'll come round to old Middleton's to-morrow to find out all about me. Halloo! there are two chaps playing ball. I guess I'll join in."

The boys were James Davenport and his cousin, Edwin Barker, and they were playing in a field belonging to Lawyer Davenport, the father of the former. The boys were about Tom's age, and belonged to the upper crust of Plympton society. They regarded themselves as socially superior to the other village boys, and had a habit of playing together, and so avoiding the possible contamination of association with the village plebeians. Of course Tom didn't know this, and if he had it would have made very little difference to him. He jumped over the wall which separated the road from the field, and called out in an easy way.

"Halloo, boys, just pitch the ball this way, will you?"

"Who are you?" demanded James Davenport haughtily.

"I haven't got my visiting-cards with me, but I can handle a ball, name or no name."

"This field is private property," said James loftily.

"Yes, private property," chimed in his cousin.

"So I supposed," answered Tom coolly, "most fields are."

"And you are trespassing."

"Am I? There isn't anything to hurt. If I do any damage, bring in your bill."

"We are playing by ourselves. We don't wish any company."

"Well, I do. I feel just like having a game at ball. Just pitch it over."

"I won't do it," said James. "Edwin, catch it."

So saying, he pitched the ball to his cousin, but Tom intercepted it before it reached the hands for which it was designed.

"Let go that ball!" exclaimed James angrily.

"Red dead-ball, isn't it?" said Tom, at the same time tossing it up and down. "Where'd you get it?"

"I'll let you know," said James menacingly. "What business have you got with my ball?"

"I'll toss it to you if you'll toss it back again," said Tom. "We'll have a social game of three."

"No, we won't. Clear out of this field, you vagabond!"

"You're very polite, but you haven't got my name right, you loafer," said Tom coolly.

"Loafer!" ejaculated James, with insulted dignity.

"Yes, you're just as much of a loafer as I am a vagabond. Good ball this!" and he kept tossing it up and down.

"Help me, Edwin, and I'll take it from him," said James Davenport, in a rage. "We'll teach the rascal a lesson."

"Will you?" said Tom. "Catch me first."

He run across the field, tossing the ball from time to time, the two boys pursuing him. He eluded their pursuit for a time, till finding himself cornered he gathered his strength and sent the ball whirling into a neighboring corn-field, where it would be very difficult to find it.

"What did you do that for?" shouted James furiously.

"For fun," said Tom. "You wouldn't play with me, so you must take the consequences."

"I'll give you a beating."

"Will you? Come on, then."

In an instant Tom had flung off his coat and stood in his shirt-sleeves, facing his two foes.

"Stand by me, Edwin—we'll rush on him together," said James.

But Tom, stepping to one side, received James singly, and flinging him on his back, made a dash at Edwin and served him in the same way.

"That's the first round," said he, squaring off. "Now get up, you loafer, and we'll try it again."

But James had been laid flat with so much force that it jarred his frame, and he didn't like it. The stranger was altogether too strong to make it pleasant.

"Why didn't you help me?" he asked, turning to Edwin.

"He had you down before I got a chance," said his cousin.

"You're a brute and a bully!" he said angrily.

"Anything more?" asked Tom coolly. "Go ahead if it does you good. You ought to know what a bully is."

"Why?"

"Because you'd be one if you had a little more courage."

James couldn't stand this. He made another dash at our hero, hoping to take him off his guard, but Tom had a quick eye and saw what was coming. He received James and again laid him flat.

"Now I'm ready for you," he said, turning to Edwin.

But the latter did not seem inclined to accept the invitation.

"James, let us go. Don't let us have anything to do with him," said he.

James by this time was picking himself up silently, and seemed inclined to follow the advice.

"I'll make you suffer for this!" he said, shaking his fist. "My father's a lawyer."

"Is he? I pity him."

"What for?"

"For having such a son."

"I ain't a thief!"

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Tom, his face darkening.

"You've stolen my ball and thrown it away."

"I didn't steal it. I took it because you were too boorish to let me play with you."

"You've lost it for me."

"If you can't find it, I'll pay you for it. My name is Tom Temple. I board with Nathan Middleton. You can send your bill there if you like. Now I'll wish you good-night and better manners."

Tom was near the wall at the time. He vaulted over and walked on, leaving the two boys half angry, half curious to know who he was.

CHAPTER IV.

A TROUBLESOME BOARDER.



TOM RE-ENTERED his new boarding-place as the clock struck eight. Mr. and Mrs. Middleton were dismissing him, but stopped short as he came in. They foresaw that he would be troublesome, but there is great power in money, and they had just a thousand reasons for keeping on good terms with him.

"Have you been taking a walk, Mr. Temple?" said Nathan blandly.

"Yes, sir."

"I hope you like our village," chimed in the lady.

"I don't know," said Tom. "I don't like the people much."

"Indeed! May I ask why?"

"They stared at me as if they had never seen a gentleman before, and one old woman stopped and wanted to know all about me."

"It must have been Prudence Peabody," said Mr. Middleton. "How did she look?"

"She was born at a time when it wasn't fashionable to be good-looking," answered Tom. "She is short, wrinkled, and walks a little lame."

"That's she."

"I told her I was the grandson of General Washing-

ton's first cousin," said Tom, "and the old fright believed it."

"I fear, my young friend, that you are not sufficiently regardful of the truth," expostulated Mr. Middleton," with mild censure.

"Oh, I was only chaffing. If she believes it, it won't do her any harm."

"I had a fight besides," continued Tom.

"A fight! Not with Miss Peabody?" asked Mrs. Middleton, horror-stricken.

"Not much. I don't fight with women," said Tom. "It was with two boys. One said his father was a lawyer."

"It must be James Davenport," said Nathan, disturbed. "How came you to fight with him?"

"He and another fellow were pitching ball, and wouldn't let me into the game, so I grabbed the ball, and they went for me."

"Were you much hurt?"

"I wasn't the one that was hurt," said Tom significantly. "I laid them both flat and threw the ball into a corn-field."

"Really," said Mrs. Middleton, who stood in considerable awe of the lawyer's family, "that was very unprincipled."

"I regret exceedingly, my young friend," said Nathan gravely, "that you should have committed an unprovoked assault upon the son and nephew of one of our first citizens."

"It was their fault," said Tom coolly. "Why were they so boorish as to decline playing with me?"

"They didn't know you."

"They know me now," said Tom significantly.

"Was the ball lost?" asked Mr. Middleton, disturbed.

"Very likely. It wouldn't be easy to find it in a corn-field."

"Then you are responsible for the loss."

"Oh, I am willing to pay for it. I told them so. If the old man——"

"The old man!"

"Yes, the lawyer—if he sends you a note about it, just pay it to him and charge to me."

"How can I be sure that I shall be repaid?" inquired Nathan cautiously.

"Oh, I'll see you paid. I've got twenty-five dollars in my pocket-book."

Nathan was relieved. He had no fancy for running any pecuniary risk.

"Still," he said, "I regret this occurrence."

"You must be very quarrelsome," said Mrs. Middleton, who didn't like Tom, and would have showed it much more plainly if he had been a poor boy.

"I suppose I am," said Tom frankly. "They used to call me the bully of the village, but I never tyrannized over weak boys. It's only the upstarts and pretenders that I interfere with. Those boys I saw to-night need a few lessons in good manners."

"My young friend, I fear you quite mistake their character. They stand high socially—*very* high—indeed I may say they belong to one of the first families, if not our very first. I had hoped you would find them congenial companions."

"I am afraid you'll be disappointed," said Tom. "They seem to me like snobs."

Mr. and Mrs. Middleton exchanged looks of discomposure. They feared that Tom would get them on bad terms with the lawyer's family, whom, like true sycophants, they were disposed to fawn upon.

"We will talk of this another time," said Nathan. "Whenever you are tired you are at liberty to retire. Is there anything you would like first?"

"Yes," said Tom unexpectedly. "I should like something to eat."

"We have had supper," said Mrs. Middleton, in a pointed manner.

"I know it, but I have been walking, and am hungry."

"It is very injurious to the health to eat just before going to sleep," said Nathan, reinforcing his wife.

"I'll take the risk," said Tom coolly. "If I get sick no one will suffer but myself."

"Corinthia, is there anything in the pantry?" asked Nathan deprecatingly, for he saw a frown on the face of his spouse.

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Middleton shortly. "Perhaps *you* are hungry, too," she added sarcastically.

"Oh, dear, no!" said Nathan hastily, "not after our hearty supper."

"Does he call the supper hearty?" thought Tom. "I'll bet the old woman won't let him have what he wants to eat."

Here Tom was mistaken, for Mr. and Mrs. Middleton were quite agreed in their notions of economy.

Very much against her will Mrs. Middleton produced some bread and butter, and on Tom's specially calling for it, some meat. Her thin lips were compressed with displeasure, and she very evidently thought our hero a glutton. If she expected her displeasure would produce the least effect on Tom, she was mistaken. He ate heartily—in fact, he ate all that was set before him.

“Have you had enough?” asked Mrs. Middleton sharply.

“It will do,” said Tom coolly.

“I am glad of it,” she retorted.

“Pleasant female that!” thought Tom. “She isn't used to me yet. She'll find it harder to starve me than she thinks.”

“Now, I think I'll go to bed,” said Tom. “Oh, there's one thing I forgot to mention; I noticed there was a straw-bed in my room.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Middleton. “Doesn't it suit you?”

“No, I am used to a mattress.”

“Mr. Middleton and I sleep on a straw-bed.”

“It's all right if you like it, but I don't like it.”

“Really,” said Mrs. Middleton, who could not control herself at the bidding of policy as well as her husband, “if you are an inmate of our family, I think you will have to conform to our regulations.”

“Then,” said Tom, “I think I had better not trouble you any longer. I can easily find another boarding-place.”

But this did not suit Mr. Middleton. He could not bear the idea of giving up twenty dollars a week, and

although it would cost money to buy a mattress, according to Tom's unreasonable desire, and make more liberal arrangements for the table, all that could be done, and still a considerable margin be left for profit.

"My young friend," he said, "Mrs. Middleton and I will talk over the matter and see what we can do. Of course our first desire is to make you as comfortable as possible."

"I am glad to hear it," said Tom, with the air of one who heard something unexpected.

"I hope you will have no cause to doubt it," Nathan continued. "Good-night, and pleasant dreams."

"Good-night," said Tom. "Please thump on my door in the morning, when breakfast is ready."

"He's a perfect pig," exclaimed Mrs. Middleton, when our hero had left the room. "I never in all my born days saw a boy eat so much."

"He certainly has a good appetite," said Nathan.

"He'll eat us out of house and home," said the lady indignantly.

"But you must remember, my dear, how well we are paid. You get six dollars a week clear profit, while out of my fourteen I have to pay the large expense of his board."

"True," said Mrs. Middleton, more calmly, "viewed in that light, it is well to keep him. But I ask you, Mr. Middleton, is it well to yield to all his unreasonable demands?"

"Why, my dear, we must try to keep him contented or he will go away."

"I hate him!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton, with energy.

"I can't say I like him," said Nathan, "but I like the money I am to receive for him."

The two talked together for an hour. Tom being the staple of their conversation. They were about to retire for the night, when a series of noises of a startling character resounded through the house, evidently proceeding from Tom's chamber.

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton. "What's the matter?"

"It's that boy," gasped Nathan.

"Go up and see what is the matter. Mr. Middleton."

"Come with me, Corinthia," said Nathan, in tremulous accents. "He may be crazy."

In a state of nervous apprehension the two made their way to the door of Tom's room.

CHAPTER V.

A WARLIKE VISIT.



WHEN Tom deposited himself in bed, he found the straw-bed even more uncomfortable than he anticipated. The straw crackled beneath him at every movement, and was far from affording that ease which our hero coveted.

"I might as well sleep on a bed of thorns or briers," he said to himself. "It's cheap, and that is the only recommendation it has, but I can't stand it, and I don't mean to."

At first Tom intended to make no disturbance till the next day, but Mrs. Middleton's evident unwillingness to provide anything better decided him to take action immediately.

"What shall I do?" he thought.

A bright idea came to him.

In his trunk were two boxes of torpedoes which he had saved over from the last Fourth of July. These he took, two or three at a time, and struck against the uncarpeted floor, producing the series of noises which startled his guardians.

"I guess that'll bring 'em up," thought Tom.

In anticipation of a visit he had slipped on his pants.

Presently he heard a tapping at the door, but at first he took no notice of it, but kept on firing the torpedoes.

"Can't you knock louder, Mr. Middleton?" said his wife impatiently, and she herself vigorously pounded the door.

"I guess I'll let 'em in," said Tom to himself.

He accordingly opened the door and stared at his visitors in a vacant manner.

"What's the matter? Is it morning?" he asked, with the air of one who had just waked up.

"What mischief are you up to?" demanded Mrs. Middleton sternly.

"I, up to mischief?" said Tom, with an air of bewilderment.

"Yes; what are you making this outrageous racket for?"

Tom passed his hand over his eyes as if to recall himself to a realization of the situation.

"I must have been firing torpedoes," he said, looking at the box in his hand.

"Torpedoes, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton, sniffing indignantly. "Do you consider that proper conduct at this time of night, disturbing the house?"

"I told you that I got up in my sleep sometimes," said Tom.

Mrs. Middleton evidently thought this "too thin," and looked her incredulity.

"What could have made you get up?" asked her husband.

"I know what it was," said Mrs. Middleton. "It was eating late at night. I knew it wouldn't agree with you."

"No doubt you are right, my dear," chimed in her husband.

"It wasn't that," said Tom bluntly. "Eating never disagrees with me. It was the straw-bed."

"The straw-bed!"

"Yes, it's as hard as a brick-bat. It doesn't agree with my spine."

"Mr. Middleton and I sleep on a straw-bed," said the lady.

"Perhaps you have a feather-bed, too," suggested our hero.

As this happened to be true, the lady did not see fit to reply directly.

"I don't believe the bed had anything to do with it," she said snappishly, "and, moreover, I don't want any torpedoes in the house."

"My dear," said her husband soothingly, "I am sure our young friend will not care to keep them. Doubtless it is a mere accident that he happened to have them."

"It's lucky they were not fire-crackers," said Tom. "It might have set the bed on fire."

"Something must be done," said Nathan, in alarm. "My dear, isn't there a feather-bed or a mattress in the house?"

"There is a mattress in the spare chamber," said the lady reluctantly.

"Then, by all means, let us give it to our young friend, that he may have a comfortable night's rest."

"That's just the thing," said Tom briskly. "I'll help you bring it in."

Mrs. Middleton would like to have objected, but there seemed to be no other way of securing quiet, and she tacitly consented. That is, she held her peace while her husband and Tom went to the spare chamber and transferred the cherished mattress to the chamber of the latter."

"There," said she, "I hope you are satisfied now."

"Thank you," said Tom politely. "It is a decided improvement. I shall sleep like a top now."

"Good-night," said Nathan, and Tom responded, "Good-night."

"I'd like to see that boy flogged," said Mrs. Middleton, addressing her husband later in the privacy of their own apartment. "He's the most impudent young ruffian I ever saw. He's turned the house upside down already."

"Think of the pay, Corinthia," said her husband soothingly. "Six dollars a week! Why, it's a dollar a day for you, leaving out Sunday."

This happily diverted his wife's thoughts in a more agreeable channel. She reflected that in a few days she would be able to buy a new bonnet with her board-money—an article she had long needed, but had been too mean to buy—and she gradually calmed down.

Now, though I by no means intend to justify Tom in his eccentric conduct, I submit that he was entitled to a comfortable bed and enough to eat, especially considering the liberal board he was to pay, and probably he would have found it difficult to compass his desires, but by some such decisive measure as he adopted. At

any rate he made no further disturbance, but "kept the peace" till morning.

"Usually breakfast at the Middletons' was a very frugal meal. Bread and butter, accompanied by thin and watery coffee, supplemented occasionally by a little cold meat, satisfied the economical pair. But they rightly judged that Tom would require something more, and Mrs. Middleton was induced to provide a small portion of beefsteak and some fried potatoes, which, in her eyes, constituted a sumptuous repast.

Tom consumed the greater portion of the steak, rightly thinking that if there was not enough for all the loss should fall to those who chose to provide too small a supply. He used much more milk and sugar than the lady of the house regarded as sufficient, but it was very evident that on this subject she and her new boarder were not likely to agree.

Breakfast was scarcely over when a tall man, with a very stiff, dignified figure was seen entering the front gate.

"It's Lawyer Davenport," said Nathan, in a flustered manner. "What can bring him here so early?"

"No doubt it is on account of the assault Mr. Temple made upon his son," said Mrs. Middleton.

"I am afraid it is," said her husband, evidently disturbed. "I fear, my young friend, you have got into hot water."

"I don't think it will scald me," said Tom coolly.

"Mr. Davenport is one of our first citizens," said Nathan.

"He seems to think he is," said Tom. "He walks so erect that he bends backward."

"He has a proper sense of his social position," said Mrs. Middleton reprovingly.

"So has his son," said Tom.

A ponderous knock here notified the party that the lawyer had arrived at the front door, and demanded admittance.

Mr. Middleton himself answered the call, and with an air of deference ushered the distinguished visitor into the sitting-room.

"I hope I see you well, Mrs. Middleton," said the visitor, with stately condescension.

"Thank you, sir; I am not as well as I have been," said the lady. "I have been subjected to unusual trials during the last twenty-four hours," she continued, with a side glance at Tom.

"I am sorry to hear it," said the lawyer. "I regret also to say that I have called this morning on rather an unpleasant matter connected, if I mistake not, with the young man whom I see here."

"This is Thomas Temple, Squire Davenport, my ward."

"Indeed! I was not aware that you had a ward."

"He is the son of my old school-mate, Stephen Temple, who desired at his death that his son should come to me."

"It is very kind of you to assume the charge," said the lawyer, who fancied that Tom was without means.

"Not at all," said Nathan modestly. "For the sake

of my old friend I am glad to assume his place to his orphan boy."

"I hope, young man," said the lawyer, "that you are sensible of Mr. Middleton's kindness."

"Oh, yes," said Tom, "I appreciate it properly."

Our hero's tone was rather peculiar, and Nathan Middleton felt uncomfortable, not knowing what he might be tempted to say. He was quite conscious that boarding Tom for twenty dollars a week did not involve any extraordinary kindness on his part.

"I believe, young man, you had some difficulty with my son yesterday," said the lawyer, in a tone calculated to overawe our hero.

"I had a little difficulty with two boys," said Tom coolly.

"My son and nephew."

"I am very sorry that anything unpleasant should have occurred, Squire Davenport," said Nathan nervously.

"It is for the young man to apologize, not you, Mr. Middleton," said the lawyer severely.

"You are quite mistaken, sir," said Tom; "it is for your son to apologize."

"Young man, this assurance is most extraordinary," gasped the lawyer, in amazement.

"If your son had behaved like a gentleman he would have had nothing to complain of," said Tom. "He refused to play with me, and I playfully threw his ball into a corn-field. Then, as he rushed at me, I defended myself."

“Mr. Middleton, do you sustain this boy in his extraordinary and defiant attitude?”

“There must have been a misunderstanding,” said Nathan eagerly. “I am anxious that Thomas should enjoy the privilege of associating with your son and nephew, and I hope when they come to know each other better they will become friends.”

“It is rather presumptuous for a charity boy to expect to associate with my family,” thought the lawyer; but he said: “If this young man will apologize for this outrage of yesterday and treat my son with proper respect, I may consent to his occasionally visiting him.”

“I am sure he will be willing,” said Mr. Middleton.

“Quite a mistake,” said Tom. “He owes me an apology for his boorish conduct. As to the ball—if it’s lost, I’ll pay for it.”

He drew out his pocket-book and displayed a roll of bills, considerably to the astonishment of the lawyer, who begun to think he had acted too hastily.

“Be kind enough to take pay for the ball out of that,” said Tom, offering a ten-dollar bill to the visitor.

Lawyer Davenport had a respect for money. Tom was no longer a charity boy, to be condescended to, but a young gentleman.

“On no account,” he said mildly. “The offer is sufficient. No doubt it was a mere boy’s quarrel. We’ll say no more about it. I shall be glad to have you come over and take supper with us some evening, Master Temple. I have no doubt you and James will become good friends yet.”

"Oh, I bear no malice," said Tom easily. "I'll be happy to come."

"Come this evening, then."

"All right. Thank you, sir."

"I must say good-morning, Mr. Middleton," said the lawyer. "Good-morning, Mr. Temple."

Mr. Davenport took care to inquire of Nathan Middleton the extent of Tom's property, when he accompanied him to the door, and went away with very different feelings toward him from those with which he entered.

"James," said he, on his return home, "I fear you have been very rude to the young gentleman who is boarding at Mr. Middleton's."

"Young gentleman! He is a bully."

"Hush, James. He is a young man of large property—fifty thousand dollars, at the very least, as Mr. Middleton informs me—just the companion I desire for you and Edwin. He very handsomely offered to buy you a new ball, but I wouldn't permit it."

"Is he so rich, father?" inquired James, in astonishment.

"Yes, you made a great mistake about him. I have invited him to supper here this evening, and I expect you and Edwin to treat him with attention."

James was like his father, and needed no admonition. Tom was no longer a bully in his eyes, but a young gentleman entitled to consideration.

CHAPTER VI.

THE POOR RELATION.



WO HOURS later a note was received from Mrs. Davenport, inviting Tom to pass the day at her house. It was brought by an errand-boy, and arrived just as Tom, having arranged his wardrobe, was about to start on a journey of exploration.

"I'll come with pleasure," said Tom. "Say I'll be round in fifteen minutes."

"You see, my dear," said Mr. Middleton, "Tom has been taken up by the Davenports; we must take care to gratify him in all his wishes. It will do us credit to have him at our house."

"I wonder they have invited him. I am sure ne was very impudent to Squire Davenport."

"Boys will be boys, my dear, and our young friend is rich."

"Well, I'm glad of one thing, he'll be away for two meals."

"True, my dear, that will be a saving. He certainly has a great appetite."

Meanwhile Tom, having brushed his hair and put on a clean collar, walked round to Lawyer Davenport's. He found the two boys in front of the house.

"Good-morning," said Tom.

“Good-morning,” said James, rather sheepishly.

“Will you let me play with you this morning?” said Tom smiling.

“We didn’t know who you were yesterday,” said James, “but as you’re a gentleman, we are glad to see you.”

“Thank you. Did you find the ball?”

“Yes. Mike, the errand-boy, found it. Shall we have a toss?”

“I should like it.”

They went into the field before referred to, and spent a couple of hours very pleasantly. James and Edwin, looking upon their companion as a young man of fortune, were very courteous and polite. Indeed it was hard to think of them as the same boys who had treated Tom so rudely the day before. Our hero was clear-sighted and understood very well the meaning of the change in their manners, but he took the world as he found it, and didn’t choose to quarrel with the respect which his wealth procured him.”

At dinner he made acquaintance with Mrs. Davenport. This lady was very much like her husband and son. When she had heard of Tom’s difficulty with James, she was very indignant, supposing our hero to be a poor boy. Now that she had ascertained his circumstances, she was prepared to receive him cordially.

“I am glad that my son and nephew have found a suitable companion,” she said affably. “I don’t want to say anything against the village boys, who are very well in their way, but of course they are not the social

equals of my boys. They are lacking in culture and refinement."

"They're low," said James.

"I was low yesterday," thought Tom, "but it's different to-day."

"Thank you, ma'am," he said, "you are very obliging."

"I am told you are to reside with the Middletons, Mr. Temple," the lady proceeded.

"Yes, ma'am."

"They are very worthy people—not stylish, but respectable. Was your father connected with them?"

"He was a school-mate of Mr. Middleton, I believe."

"I say, Tom," said James, "you must look out or you will get the gout there."

"I'll take care of that," said Tom.

"Mrs. Middleton will, if you don't."

"James, you should not make such remarks," said his mother. "It is true, I believe, that the Middletons are rather economical in their table expenses, but doubtless out of regard to Mr. Temple they will adopt a different policy."

Tom smiled, but said nothing. He did not consider it honorable to refer to Mr. Middleton's domestic arrangements.

At this moment two girls entered the room. One was evidently Mrs. Davenport's daughter, as she bore a striking resemblance to that dignified lady. She was by no means pretty, but evidently thought considerable of herself, and was not troubled with bashfulness. She

made a low courtesy, in the most approved dancing-school style, to Tom, who was sufficiently well-bred to acquit himself creditably.

"My daughter, Imogene, Mr. Temple," said Mr. Davenport.

The other girl was probably a year younger, and as pretty as Imogene was unattractive. But she was plainly dressed, and had a timid, retiring look. In fact she was a poor cousin, a dependent upon the lawyer's bounty, and made to feel her position by all the family.

"Mary Somers, Mr. Temple," said Mrs. Davenport slightly.

Mary blushed, and offered her hand timidly to our hero.

"What a pretty girl!" thought Tom. "She's ever so much prettier than the other, but I guess from the old lady's manner that she hasn't got the stamps."

They sat down to the dinner-table, which Tom saw with satisfaction presented a very different appearance from the frugal board of Mr. Middleton. It was a capital dinner, and Tom enjoyed it.

"I shouldn't mind boarding here," he thought.

There was only one drawback. He was seated next to Imogene, when he would have very much preferred a seat next to Mary Somers, the poor cousin.

CHAPTER VII.

A ROW AND A RESCUE.



HAT shall we do this afternoon?" asked James, as they rose from the dinner-table.

"Suppose we go out rowing?" said Edwin.

"I should like that," said Tom eagerly.

"Can you row?" asked James.

"I can keep up my side of the boat," said Tom.

"Very well, we'll go, then," said James. "Come along, fellows."

Half a mile from the lawyer's house was a river, narrow but with a swift current. Thither the boys directed their steps. Under a tree a round-bottomed boat of fair size was padlocked.

"The boat belongs to me," said James complacently. "It was a birthday present."

"It looks like a good one. Let us get in," said Tom. They unlocked the boat and pushed off.

"You can steer," said James, "and Edwin and I will row."

"Just as you please," said Tom. "You own the boat."

He would have preferred to row, but was willing to wait till one of the boys got tired and yielded the oars. He seated himself therefore in the end of the boat and steered.

"I am not used to the river," said Tom, "and you must tell me if I steer wrong."

They had the current in their favor, and the boat went merrily onward, easily impelled by the two boys, who were evidently pleased with their speed.

"It'll be rather different rowing back," said Tom.

"Oh, we can manage it," said James, with an air of consequence. "We are used to rowing."

"The current will be against you."

"We can manage," said James confidently.

A little later they were startled by a loud scream. A boy of six had tumbled into the river while playing on the bank, and though it was shallow, was in danger of drowning.

Tom was the first to perceive his danger.

"Row to the shore, quick!" he shouted. "A boy is drowning."

He turned the rudder, and James and his cousin mechanically obeyed. Tom reached over and grasped the urchin by his arm and deposited him in the bottom of the boat.

It was a young Irish boy, dirty-faced and in rags, and dripping, of course, from his recent immersion.

James surveyed him with evident disgust.

"The dirty brat will wet the boat and make it unfit for us to stay in," he said.

"Do you want me to pitch him into the water again?" asked Tom coolly.

"No," said James slowly. "Of course I don't want him to drown, but I don't enjoy taking in one of the



““ROW TO THE SHORE, QUICK!” TOM SHOUTED. ‘A BOY IS DROWNED.’”

lower order as a passenger. We'd better put him on shore."

"So I think," said Edwin. "The little beggar will be better off there."

"I don't think so," said Tom. "Do you see how the little chap is shivering? He'll catch his death of cold if he doesn't change his wet clothes soon. What is your name, my little boy?"

"Jimmy Grady," said the boy, his teeth chattering.

"He's got your name, James," said Tom slyly. "He's your namesake."

"Don't associate me with him," said James loftily.

"Of course it's very impudent for him to have the same name," said Tom smiling. "Perhaps he'll change it. Where do you live, Jimmy?"

"There," said the boy, pointing to a small, unpainted dwelling further up the river, and about twenty rods from the bank.

"Turn back," said Tom, "we'll carry him home."

"I don't choose to trouble myself about such a beggar as that," said James. "We'll go on, and on our way back we'll land him."

"And let him die of exposure?" said Tom sternly.

"Oh, such beggars are tough," said James, in a tone quite destitute of feeling. "Row away, Edwin."

"I forbid it!" said Tom, with startling emphasis. "Reverse your stroke. We are going back."

At the same time he changed the course of the boat as far as he was able by turning the rudder.

James Davenport flushed. He was accustomed to have his own way. and he didn't relish dictation.

"The boat is mine," said he, doggedly. "*We won't* turn back!"

"Turn back instantly, or I'll throw you overboard," said Tom, in a determined tone.

"I haven't got to obey you," said James angrily.

Tom sprung from his seat, grasped James by the shoulder, and repeated his command. There was something in our hero's look when he was fairly aroused that showed that he was not to be trifled with. James thought of his encounter the day before, and he was by no means sure that Tom would not carry out his threat.

"Will you do it or not?" demanded Tom.

"If you're so very anxious, I'll do it," said James, backing down. "You make more fuss about the little chap than he deserves."

"His life is worth as much to him as ours is to us," said Tom, resuming his seat. "When I have restored him to his home, I will go up or down, as you choose."

Rather mortified at his defeat, and indignant also, James sullenly rowed to the shore at the point opposite little Jimmy's humble home. His mother was on the bank, looking anxiously for her lost boy.

"It's me, mother," said Jimmy, his tear-begrimed face lighting up with joy.

"We've got Jimmy safe, Mrs. Grady," called out Tom, cheerfully. "He tumbled into the river, and is wet through. You'd better take off his wet clothes, or he'll get cold."

"The saints be praised!" exclaimed the poor woman, fervently. "I thought the poor boy was drowned. I'm

sure I'm very thankful to you, young gentlemen, for taking so much trouble with a poor woman's boy. How could you run away so, Jimmy, darlint?"

"I didn't mane to tumble in," said Jimmy, as Tom helped him over the side into his mother's arms.

"Thank you kindly, gentlemen," said Mrs. Grady, repeating her thanks, but only Tom responded.

The other two regarded the poor woman scornfully.

"Thank Heaven! we've got rid of that beggar," said James. "I don't mean to let one into my boat again. I shall have to have it washed out."

"Whenever either of you gets tired, I'll row," said Tom.

"I'm tired," said Edwin. "It's hard rowing up stream!"

"Against the current. I told you it would be. I'll take your place."

They changed places, and Tom begun to ply his oar. James soon found out that our hero had not only rowed before, but that he was very strong and dexterous, and considerably more than a match for him, even if he had not been tired. He would have been glad to have been relieved himself, but was too proud to own that he was fatigued.

"Shall we go up or down?" asked Tom.

"I don't appear to have much to say about it," said James unpleasantly. "You appear to control the boat."

"Come, James, don't bear malice," said Tom pleasantly. "I wouldn't have interfered, except to save Jimmy a fit of sickness. I knew you didn't realize the

danger of his going a long time with wet clothing. Now I am ready to receive your commands. Up or down?"

"We'd better go home," said Edwin. "It'll be hard getting there as it is, against the current."

"Home then," said James, his pride somewhat soothed by Tom's leaving the matter to him.

Presently Tom, seeing that his companions lagged in rowing, said:

"If you are tired, James, I'll take both oars for a little while."

"I don't believe you can."

"Oh, I'm used to it."

"Try it then," said James, glad of a respite; "I am not much tired, but I'd like to see how you will make out."

Tom took both oars and used them vigorously. He found his task a difficult one, but he kept up single-handed for a mile, when Edwin came to his assistance.

They were all glad to reach the starting-point. Jumping out, James secured the boat.

"Now we'll go home," he said.

"We've had a bully row," said Tom, "though it was rather a hard pull back. It's lucky for Jimmy that we went back."

"It would have served the little beggar right if he'd drowned," muttered James.

"I'm glad he didn't, though," said Tom.

"Small loss if he had," muttered the lawyer's son.

"Perhaps some might say so of us," said Tom.

"I hope you don't compare me with that low boy," said James scornfully.

“I dare say his mother wouldn’t exchange one Jimmy for another,” remarked Tom jokingly.

“She’s welcome to the brat,” said James loftily. “I have nothing in common with such people.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TWO COUSINS.



HE SUPPER was as excellent as the dinner, and Tom, made hungry by his exertions upon the river, enjoyed it.

By accident he found himself seated next to Mary Somers, the poor cousin. The two conversed quite socially, rather to the disgust of Imogene, who, hearing that Tom was rich, wished to monopolize him herself. She was vexed to find that he was considerably more attentive to her penniless cousin than he had been to herself.

If Mary had been homely, and she herself handsome, she could have been quite friendly, but Mary's fresh color and bright eyes showed to such advantage compared with her own sallow complexion and dull eyes that she envied and hated her.

"Did you have a pleasant afternoon, Mr. Temple?" asked Mary.

"Very pleasant," said Tom. "We had an adventure, too."

"What was it?"

"We saved a little Irish boy from drowning."

"That is new business for Cousin James," said Mary, smiling.

"You needn't lay it to me," said James. "I didn't have anything to do with the little brat."

"You speak as if it were discreditable," said Tom. "I'll stand the blame."

"I didn't want him to drown," said James, "but I am not partial to ragged boys."

"It is always well to be humane," said Lawyer Davenport. "I am glad that my boy was instrumental in preserving the life of a fellow-being."

Mary and Tom continued their conversation, while Imogene grew more and more vexed with her cousin, till she had the ill-breeding to say, in an ill-natured tone:

"Really, Mary, you talk so much that nobody else gets a chance."

"I am sorry," said Mary blushing.

"I am just as much to blame," said Tom good-naturedly. "I've been asking your cousin questions."

"I hate to see girls so forward," said Imogene spitefully.

Mary looked pained, and there was some spirit in her answer.

"I didn't think it would be polite to refuse answering Mr. Temple," she said.

"Imogene is right," said Mrs. Davenport, who thoroughly sympathized with her daughter. "You are too forward."

Mary's mouth quivered with mortification, but she said nothing. Neither did Tom. He was indignant at the petty malice of Imogene, and determined, if he could not speak to Mary, he would not speak at all. He only answered the questions of the rest in monosyllables during the remainder of the meal.

When supper was over, Mrs. Davenport said:

"We will go into the parlor. Imogene, can't you play for Mr. Temple?"

"Do you like music, Mr. Temple?" asked Imogene.

"Pretty well," said Tom, "but I am not much of a judge of it."

"I have taken lessons for three years," said Imogene complacently.

"Have you? Do you like it?"

"I am passionately fond of it," said the young lady.

"Does your cousin play, too?"

"A little," said Imogene ungraciously. "She hasn't much taste for it, but it is really necessary for her to learn."

"Why?"

"Because she is to be a governess," said Imogene. "She is very poor—in fact she has nothing of her own. Pa kindly agreed to take her and give her an education, so as to qualify her to earn her own living. She'll be a governess, or teach school, or something of the kind, when she's old enough."

"Perhaps she won't have to," said Tom, who liked to annoy his companion.

"She has got to earn her living."

"I mean she may get married."

"Yes," said Imogene, "but, of course, she can't expect to make much of a match. She may get a farmer, or mechanic, perhaps."

"I suppose," said Tom, "*you* would not marry a farmer or mechanic?"

"I should think not," said Imogene, tossing her head. "I have a right to look higher. I may marry a lawyer like pa. What do you expect to be, Mr. Temple?"

"I haven't thought about it," said Tom.

"I suppose you won't have to do anything. You are rich, are you not?"

"I suppose so," said Tom, who was not inclined to boast of his wealth, "but I shouldn't be willing to be idle."

"You might buy an estate and take care of it, and live on your income."

"Then I should be a farmer."

"Oh, that's different. You wouldn't have to work yourself. What shall I play for you?" asked the young lady, who was now seated at the piano.

"I'm not particular. I like songs best."

Imogene sang a fashionable song, but her voice was thin and shrill, and Tom could not in conscience praise the performance. He thanked her, but did not ask for another. Imogene, however, played two other pieces, and then rose from the piano.

"Miss Mary," said Tom, "won't you play something?"

"Shall I aunt?" asked Mary.

"If Mr. Temple wishes to hear you," said Mrs. Davenport ungraciously. "He will make allowances, as he can hardly expect you to perform as well as Imogene."

So Mary took her place at the piano.

"I do not play very much," she said apologetically.

"I'm not a critic," said Tom. "I sha'n't find fault. Do you sing?"

"A few common songs, such as 'Sweet Home.'"

"That's just what I like."

So Mary played and sang "Sweet Home." Her voice was sweet and fresh, far superior to her cousin's, and her performance was wholly free from affectation.

"Thank you," said Tom, at the conclusion of the song. "I enjoyed it very much."

He was about to ask for another song, when Imogene said:

"Don't bang away on the piano any more, Mary, I am sure Mr. Temple will gladly excuse you."

"You are mistaken," said Tom, "I particularly enjoy your cousin's singing."

"I want to show you some engravings," said Imogene, determined to separate the two.

Mary rose from the piano. It would be impossible to continue after such a broad hint.

"I shall hope to hear you again," said Tom, as he led her to a seat.

"Some other time I will sing to you, if you wish," said Mary. "Imogene doesn't want me to now."

"What a spiteful girl her cousin is!" thought Tom. "She's a little more disagreeable than James, if possible. If she expects to make any impression on me, she's very much mistaken."

Tom had no further opportunity to converse with Mary Somers that evening. Imogene laid herself out to entertain him, and at all events succeeded in monopolizing his attention. Tom was not unaccustomed to society, and although he was weary of his companion, he was too

polite to say so. He permitted her to show him several collections of engravings, and forced himself to converse, though his eyes frequently wandered to Mary, who was sitting at the other end of the room, wholly neglected. Neither James nor Edwin thought it necessary to go near her, but were playing a game of checkers, while Mr. Davenport was nodding over his newspaper, and Mrs. Davenport was attending to some feminine work.

Our hero was glad when the time came to go. He found the Middletons curious to hear the particulars of his reception by the great man of the place.

"What do you think of Miss Imogene?" asked Nathan.

"She's thin and bony," said Tom; "not at all good-looking."

"Really," said Nathan, rather shocked, "I think you are unjust. She is considered a very stylish young lady."

"Her cousin Mary is pretty," said Tom.

"I suppose you know she is only a poor relation."

"I know all about that," said Tom, laughing. "Imogene told me. She thought I was paying her too much attention."

Mr. and Mrs. Middleton exchanged glances. They understood that the great man's daughter was pleased with Tom, and thought more of him accordingly.

"Will you have some refreshments before you retire?" asked Mrs. Middleton.

"No, thank you. I had a jolly supper at Mr. Davenport's."

Mrs. Middleton was relieved to hear this, and did not press her invitation.

The next day Tom went on an exploring expedition. He was returning about the middle of the afternoon, when he was startled by a young girl's shriek. Turning his head he saw a terrified figure pursued by a fierce dog. A moment's glance revealed to him that it was Mary Somers.

She recognized him at the same moment.

"Oh, save me, Mr. Temple!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands.

"I will," said Tom resolutely.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOG AND HIS MASTER.



TOM HAD been in the woods, where by good fortune he had cut a stout stick with a thick, gnarled top, something like the top of a cane. Armed with this weapon, he rushed between Mary and her pursuer, and brought down the knob with full force on the dog's back. The attention of the furious animal—a large bull-dog—was diverted to his assailant. With a fierce howl he rushed upon Tom. But our hero was wary and expected the attack. He jumped on one side and brought down the stick with terrible force upon the dog's head. The animal fell, partially stunned, his quivering tongue protruding from his mouth.

“It won't do to leave him so,” thought Tom; “when he revives he'll be as dangerous as before.”

He dealt the prostrate animal two more blows, which settled his fate. The furious brute would no longer do any one harm.

“Oh, thank you, Mr. Temple!” said Mary Somers fervently, a trace of color returning to her cheeks. “I was terribly frightened.”

“I don't wonder,” said Tom. “The brute was dangerous.”

“How brave you are!” exclaimed the young lady, in admiration.

"It doesn't take much courage to hit a dog on the head with a stick," said Tom modestly.

"Many boys would have run," said Mary.

"What, and left you unprotected?" said Tom indignantly. "None but a coward would have done that."

"My cousin James run away," said Mary.

"Did he see the dog chasing you?"

"Yes."

"And what did he do?"

"He jumped over a stone wall."

"Perhaps he didn't have a stick with him," said Tom considerably. "I shouldn't like to have tackled the brute without that."

"Yes; James had a gun. He had just come from hunting."

"All I can say is, that it isn't *my* style," said Tom.

"Do you see how he froths at the mouth? I believe the dog was mad."

"How fearful!" exclaimed Mary, with a shudder.

"Did you suspect that before?"

"Yes, I suspected it when I first saw him."

"And yet you dared to meet him?"

"It was safer than to run. I wonder whose dog it is?"

"I'll tell you," said a brutal voice.

Turning, Tom beheld a stout young fellow, about two years older than himself, with a face in which the animal seemed to predominate.

"I'll let you know. What have you been doing to my dog?"

Addressed in this tone, Tom thought it unnecessary to throw away politeness upon the new-comer.

"Killing him," he answered shortly.

"What business had you to kill my dog?" demanded the other fiercely.

"It was your business to keep the brute locked up, where he wouldn't do any one harm," said Tom. "As you didn't I was obliged to kill him."

"I'll flog you within an inch of your life," said the other, with an oath.

"You'd better not try it," said Tom coolly. "I suppose you think I ought to have let the dog bite Miss Somers."

"He wouldn't have bitten her."

"He would. He was chasing her with that intention."

"It was only in sport."

"I suppose he was frothing at the mouth only in sport," said Tom. "The dog was probably mad. You ought to thank me for killing him. He might have bitten you."

"That don't go down," said the other coarsely. "It's much too thin."

"It's true," said Mary Somers, speaking for the first time.

"Of course you'll stand up for your sweetheart," said the butcher boy (for this was his business), "but that's neither here nor there. I paid five dollars for that dog, and if he don't pay me what I gave, I'll beat him."

"I shall do nothing of the sort," said Tom quietly. "A dog like that ought to be killed, and no one has any right to let him run loose, risking the lives of people."

The next time you get five dollars you'd better invest it better."

"Then you won't pay me the money?" exclaimed the other, in a passion. "I'll break your head."

"Come on then," said Tom. "I've got something to say about that," and he squared off scientifically.

"Oh, don't fight with him, Mr. Temple—Tom," said Mary Somers, much distressed. "He's much stronger than you."

"He'll find that out soon enough, I'm thinking," growled Tom's big opponent.

This was no doubt true. Ben Miller was not only stouter and larger, but stronger than our hero. On the other hand he didn't know how to use his strength. It was undisciplined brute force, and that was all. If he could have got Tom by his waist the latter would have been completely at his mercy, but our hero knew that well enough, and didn't choose to allow it. He was a pretty fair boxer, and stood on his defense, calm and wary.

When Ben rushed in, thinking to seize him, he found himself greeted with two blows on the face, dealt in quick succession, one of which struck him on the nose, the other in the eye, the effect of both being to make his head spin.

"I'll mash you for that," he yelled in a frenzy of rage, but as he rushed on a second time he never thought of guarding his face. The consequence was a couple more blows, the other eye being assailed this time.

Ben was astonished. Indeed, I may well say he was

astounded. He expected to "chaw up" his small antagonist at the first outset. Instead of that, there stood Tom cool and unhurt, while he could feel that his nose was bleeding, while both eyes were in a very uncomfortable condition. He stopped short and stared at Tom as well as he could through his injured optics.

"Where did you learn to fight?" he asked, rubbing his wounds.

"Of Professor Thompson," said Tom.

"Who's he?"

"He teaches boxing."

"How did your fists get so hard?"

"They're not very hard," said Tom, "but they're rather harder than your nose or eyes. Do you want any more?"

"Not just now," said Ben. "I say, what'll you take to teach me boxin'?"

"I shouldn't dare to," said Tom.

"Why not?"

"When you'd learned you could lick me easily."

"Well, I wouldn't," said Ben. "I'm a rough customer, I expect, but you're a trump, and you've got grit, I vow if you haven't. There's my hand, to show I don't bear no malice."

Tom offered his hand, though he feared there might be craft in the offer of friendship. But it was honestly meant. Ben was not altogether a brute, and he really felt respect for Tom's pluck. He gave him a cordial pressure, and said:

"It's all right, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Tom. "I hope your face doesn't pain you."

"Yes, it does, but no matter. It'll soon be better."

"Now," said Tom, "I'm willing to pay you the five dollars you lost on the dog."

"No," said Ben. "I guess you're right about his being an ugly brute. Maybe he was mad, as you say."

"I feel sure of it," said Tom. "Look at him."

"Well, I'll bury the poor brute. It wasn't his fault he got mad."

"Good-morning," said Tom. "I'll see you again about the boxing. Now I am going to accompany this young lady home."

"You needn't put yourself to so much trouble, Mr. Temple," said Mary.

"It's no trouble," said Tom politely. "I see you are nervous. That's only natural."

"You have saved my life, Mr. Temple," said Mary warmly. "I cannot tell you how grateful I am."

"I'll take that for granted," said Tom. "I am going to ask a favor."

"I shall be sure to grant it."

"Then don't call me Mr. Temple. I'm not used to that name from my friends. Call me Tom."

"If you wish me to," said Mary bashfully.

"Yes, I do. When you call me Mr. Temple, it makes me feel as if I were your uncle, or grandfather, or some one equally venerable."

Mary laughed.

"Perhaps you'd like to have me call you Uncle Tom," she said.

"That would be better than Mr. Temple," said our hero, "but as there's another well-known Uncle Tom, I would rather be called only Tom."

"I'll remember, Tom," said Mary hesitatingly.

"That's right," said Tom with satisfaction.

They talked together pleasantly until they reached Mr. Davenport's house. Imogene saw them coming from the front window where she was sitting, and her face grew dark with vexation and jealousy.

CHAPTER X.

A GIRL'S SPITE.



EALLY, Mary," said Imogene coldly, "Mr. Temple must have a singular opinion of you."

Even the mildest natures are capable of indignation at times, and Mary showed her sense of her cousin's injustice.

"I don't know why," she said.

"It isn't the custom for young ladies to call on young men and ask their escort."

"Who has done it?" demanded Mary.

"It looks very much as if you had done it," said Imogene.

"Your suspicion is ridiculous," said Mary with dignity.

"Considering that my father supports you, you might treat me with greater respect," said Imogene angrily.

"I am not likely to forget my dependence, Imogene," said Mary. "You take care to remind me of it often enough. You might spare me at least before Mr. Temple."

"I suppose you wish him to think you a rich young lady," said Imogene coarsely, "but it is of no use. He understands that you are a beggar, and are being educated for a governess."

"I'd like to wring the girl's neck," thought Tom,

who felt for Mary, under the coarse abuse which her cousin thought fit to heap upon her. He thought it quite time to speak.

"I have just as much respect for Miss Somers as if she were an heiress," he said, with a look of sympathy which Mary saw and appreciated. "I was fortunate enough to meet your cousin a short time since, Miss Davenport, when she was exposed to a great danger."

"From which Mr. Temple's courage saved me," said Mary gratefully.

"Really, one would think you had been attacked by a wild beast."

"That is really the case," said Tom.

"A wild beast—in Plympton!" exclaimed Imogene in amazement.

"Yes, the worst kind of a wild beast—a mad-dog. Fortunately, I had a stick with me and killed him."

"After your brother James had run away and left me to my fate," said Mary, a little bitterly.

Imogene's curiosity led her to inquire into the details of the rescue. Though not altogether pleased with the growing intimacy of Tom and her poor cousin, she was glad that it was only a chance meeting, and that it was only an instinct of common humanity that led to our hero's interfering in her behalf. Considering the youth of the parties, I may be charged with exaggerating her feelings, but Imogene is by no means the only girl of fifteen who suffers from jealousy. She was not in love of course, but she was covetous of attention, and the possible rivalry of her cousin made her very angry. She

begun to think, on the whole, that she had been too open in her spite, and that this was not the surest way of winning Tom's favor. She was clear-sighted enough to see that his sympathies in the present case were with Mary.

Softening her tone, therefore, she said:

"At any rate, I am glad it has brought you to the house, Mr. Temple. Pray come in, and let me offer you a plate of strawberries and cream."

Tom was not heroic enough to withstand such an offer as this. He was fond of strawberries, and he knew there was no chance of getting any at the Middletons'. They would have thought it sinful extravagance to spend money on such a luxury.

"Thank you," he said, and entered.

"You'd better go up-stairs and change your dress, Mary," said her cousin. "Really the one you have on looks disgracefully dirty."

"I fell while I was running away from the dog," said Mary.

Just here James entered. He looked rather sheepish when he saw Mary.

"Halloo! Are you all right, Mary?" he asked.

"Yes!" she said, rather significantly. "I am glad you were prudent enough not to run into danger on my account."

"The dog came so suddenly," said James, coloring, "that I didn't have time to think."

"So you jumped over the wall. I don't know what would have become of me if Mr. Temple had not come along."

"Did you have a gun?" asked James.

"No; I had a stick that I cut in the woods."

"He killed the dog with it," said Mary, "and afterward he conquered the dog's owner."

"You don't mean to say you fought with Ben Miller?" exclaimed James, in surprise.

"He insisted on my paying for the dog or fighting him," said Tom. "I chose the last."

"Why, he's twice as strong as you," said James. "He could whip you and me together, that is if I would condescend to fight with such a low fellow."

"I had to condescend," said Tom laughing, "as he attacked me furiously."

"What did you do?"

"I condescended to give him the worst of it. He won't want to fight with me again."

"I don't understand it. He is certainly stronger than you."

"He doesn't know how to use his strength. I can box, and while I warded off his blows I put in a few that he didn't like."

"Then you box?"

"A little."

"I'll take care not to get into a fight with him," said James to himself. "If he can whip Ben Miller he's more than a match for me."

Meanwhile Mary had gone up-stairs and changed her dress, as her cousin suggested.

Imogene, having Tom to herself, became very agreeable, loaded his plate with strawberries, and strove to

ingratiate herself with him. But Tom did not easily forget the spite which she had exhibited toward her cousin, and Imogene would hardly have felt flattered had she been able to read the real opinion which he entertained concerning her.

"Take some more strawberries—do, Mr. Temple," said Imogene.

"Thank you," said Tom, "but I have eaten heartily. Besides, your cousin hasn't had any."

"Oh, Mary doesn't care for strawberries," said Imogene carelessly.

"Yes, I do," said Mary, who that moment entered. "I think they are beautiful."

Imogene frowned.

"Oh, well, empty the dish if you like," said she rudely.

"If she does, she won't have as much as we have eaten," said Tom. "Let me help you, Miss Mary."

And to Imogene's vexation he deposited the remaining strawberries in a plate and handed them to Mary.

"Thank you," said Mary, and chafed by her cousin's rudeness she defiantly seasoned and ate the strawberries.

Imogene rose abruptly while Mary was still eating.

"Come into the parlor, Mr. Temple," she said. "I would like to show a piece of music which my music-teacher just brought me."

"You must excuse me, Miss Davenport," said Tom, bowing. "I have not been home since morning, and I need to change my dress as well as your cousin."

"Don't mind your dress. I'll excuse it."

"But I feel dirty. I have been tramping about the woods. I wouldn't have ventured into a young lady's presence except under the circumstances."

"I am sorry the dog is dead for your sake, Mary," said Imogene sarcastically. "You might contrive to get rescued again in a day or two."

"I would rather be excused," said Mary Somers. "I wouldn't have such a fright again for a thousand dollars."

"It would pay you, as you are never likely to get so much money in any other way."

"I am not likely to forget that I am poor, Imogene," said Mary, in a hurt tone.

"Good-by," said Tom.

When Tom had gone the luckless Mary had to undergo another attack.

"I should be ashamed to lay myself out to attract attention as you do, Mary," said her amiable cousin.

"Who says I have?"

"I say so. It is really sickening to see how you try to attract Mr. Temple. You seem to forget that he is rich, or going to be, and that you will only be a poor governess."

"I think it is mean, Imogene, to remind me of my poverty before strangers."

"I wouldn't if you didn't put on so many airs. Really it is sickening."

"If we were to change places I would not taunt you with your dependence."

"Wait till I am dependent," said Imogene. "I flatter myself there is no fear of that. My father is the

wealthiest man in the town, which is fortunate for you. Although you are permitted to share in the same advantages with his children, you ought always to remember your true position. You ought to be more respectful to me and James, for, though we are your cousins, we are far above you in social position."

Poor Mary! It was not the first time she had been compelled to listen to such admonitions from her haughty cousin.

She left the room with an aching heart. Her material wants were provided for—she lacked not for food or clothing—but she sought in vain for the sympathy which the heart craves. She felt that she was regarded with disdain by her uncle's family, and she longed for the time when she could throw off the thralldom of dependence and earn her own living.

"I hate her!" said Imogene to herself, as her cousin closed the door. "With her meek face and cajoling ways, she is artfully trying to get Tom Temple interested in her. She sha'n't succeed if I can help it. I'll show him her real character. I wish pa would send her off to some cheap boarding-school."

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER THREE MONTHS.



THREE months passed, and Tom was still a boarder with the Middletons. The academy—for there was one in the town—was in session, and Tom was numbered among the pupils. James Davenport, his sister Imogene, and Mary Somers, also attended. Edwin, who had only been on a visit, had returned to his home in the city.

Our hero had easily gained an ascendancy in the school. His physical prowess made his companions shy of opposing him, and I am compelled to say that he showed a disposition to assert authority over his school-fellows. He oftentimes insisted on carrying his point, when it would have been in better taste to consult the wishes of others. There was evidently some ground for the name which he had won in his former home, that of the bully of the village. But Tom had redeeming traits. He always sided with the weaker against the stronger. Though he domineered over the smaller boys, he allowed no one else to do so. He had more than once interfered to protect younger boys from the exactions of the lawyer's son, who was also inclined to be despotic, but was mean as well. James was always compelled to give in to Tom, partly because he was afraid of him, but partly, also, because he respected Tom's wealth. "A

boy who is rich has a right to command," thought James. Still he did not like Tom, nor did Tom like him, but James thought it best to preserve the peace between them. As for Imogene, she partly liked and partly hated our hero. He was rich, and she was ambitious of receiving his attentions, but she hated him because he would often neglect her and devote himself to Mary Somers, who, poor girl, received more than one angry lecture from her jealous cousin.

"Was it my fault that Tom chose to go home with me?" she asked on one occasion.

"Probably you invited him?" sneered Imogene.

"I did not."

"Then you looked as if you wanted him to come. I know your sly ways, miss."

"You are too bad, Imogene. Go and speak to Tom, if you want to—I am not to blame. Besides, doesn't he go home with you sometimes?"

"That is different. I am his social equal. He is rich, and so am I. But you are as poor as poverty."

"It isn't very kind to be reminding me of that all the time."

"I wouldn't if you didn't forget your place. You seem to forget that you have got to earn your own living."

"I wish I could now," said Mary rather bitterly. "I would rather work among strangers, no matter how hard, than to be a dependent, and be continually twitted with my poverty."

"There's gratitude for you," said Imogene sarcastically.

"I would defy any one to feel grateful to *you*," said Mary with some spirit.

"I wish pa would follow my advice and send you to a boarding-school," said Imogene.

"I wish he would," answered her cousin. "I might get a little peace then."

"Fine talk, miss. You wouldn't be willing to leave your darling Tom."

Mary was about to reply, when both girls started, for it so happened that our hero was close behind them.

"Who is talking about me?" he asked roguishly, for he had heard the word "darling."

"Imogene," said Mary quickly.

"Thank you for your flattering opinion of my humble self," said Tom, bowing low.

"It's a mistake," said Imogene. "I was alluding to Mary's unwillingness to go to a boarding-school because she would be separated from you."

"Is that true?" asked Tom, turning to Mary with evident pleasure.

"It is true that I should miss you, Tom," said Mary frankly.

"I am glad to hear that."

"But still there are reasons why I should be willing to go to a boarding-school."

"Couldn't we go together?" asked Tom insinuatingly.

"I am afraid you couldn't pass for a girl," said Mary laughing.

"I am afraid not," said Tom reflectively. "My mustache would betray me."

"There isn't enough of it to do any harm," said Mary santly.

"I will be revenged for that," said Tom. "When you slight my mustache you touch me in my tenderest point."

"Mary," said Imogene sharply, "I wish you would stop talking nonsense."

Imogene disliked particularly the familiarity that marked Mary's conversation with our hero. Though she had known him equally long, she did not venture upon a similar tone, nor would she have succeeded very well in *badinage*, for she had little sense of humor. It made her angry to think Tom was more intimate with her poor cousin than with herself.

"Let us be serious, then," said Tom. "Is it true that you are going to a boarding-school, Mary?"

"Ask Imogene."

Tom turned to Imogene.

"Very probable," said Imogene snappishly.

"And shall you go too?"

"Oh, no," answered the young lady. "I should not be willing to give up my fine home for the shabby accommodations of a boarding-school."

"Then why is your cousin to go?"

"Her case is different."

"Why?"

"I'll tell you," answered Mary, her lip curling, "and spare Imogene the trouble. I am a poor relation. Some time I've got to work for my living. It doesn't matter much about me. The shabby accommodations of a boarding-school will suit me very well."

"That is perfectly true," said Imogene sharply, "though you probably don't mean it. As you can't expect anything better than a common home when you are grown up, it would be better that you should prepare for it in a boarding-school than to become accustomed to luxury in my father's house."

"You are extremely considerate, Imogene," said Mary. "I suppose I ought to feel grateful to you for thinking so much about what would be best for me."

"I don't expect any gratitude from you, miss," retorted Imogene, "though my papa does board you and pay all your bills."

"Tom must feel very much interested in our conversation," said Mary, flushing with mortification.

"Uncommonly," said Tom. "Do I understand that you mean to earn your living some day?"

"Yes, if I get the chance."

"What are you going to do?"

"Be a teacher—seamstress—anything."

"Good!" said Tom. "I'll engage you to give me lessons."

"In what?"

"Sewing," said Tom gravely; "or would you recommend knitting?"

Mary laughed.

"I should prefer sewing, as I understand it better; but I am afraid you won't be patient enough."

"Try me."

By this time they had reached the lawyer's house, and the two girls entered. Imogene was thoroughly in earnest in her resolution to get rid of Mary.

That evening a family conclave was held; the papers were examined for the advertisement of a cheap boarding-school, the cheapest was selected, and early the next week Mary Somers started by the coach for a new home.

As the coach whirled away Imogene looked after it with exultation.

“I’ve got rid of her,” she exclaimed, “and now I shall have Tom all to myself ”

But Tom’s own stay in Plympton was to be short, though she did not know it, nor he either.

CHAPTER XII.

BAD NEWS FOR TOM.



TOM GOT along tolerably well with the Midletons. They had found out that it was necessary to give him his own way, for he was sure to obtain it sooner or later in a way that annoyed them. They were obliged to considerably improve their frugal table, but after all there was a handsome profit in Tom's board, and besides, they fared better themselves.

At the end of every month Nathan rode over to Centerville, twelve miles distant, and collected eighty-three dollars and thirty-four cents for Tom's board. He might have waited for a check, but he was afraid it might be delayed, and besides, he had a chance to combine a little insurance business with his other errand.

So it happened that one October day he stopped his horse before the office of Ephraim Sharp, attorney-at-law, who had charge of Tom's property. With a pleasant smile, he entered the office and greeted the attorney, who was sitting at a desk, his brow knit with care.

"How do you do, Mr. Sharp?" said Nathan. "Fine morning!"

"Is it?" said the lawyer abruptly. "I hadn't time to think of the weather."

"You see the month brings me round," said Nathan. "Tom's very well."

“And you want that money for his board I suppose?”

“Well, I don’t mind telling you that it will be convenient,” answered Nathan, rubbing his hands with the pleased look of a man who is to receive money.

“Sit down, Mr. Middleton,” said the lawyer. “I am glad you have come over; I want to talk to you.”

“I hope he won’t propose to take Tom away from me,” thought Mr. Middleton, a little nervously. It occurred to him that Tom might have written to Mr. Sharp expressing a desire to leave Plympton. Yet that seemed hardly likely, for his young ward had appeared quite contented.

“I wish to speak to you about Tom’s property,” Mr. Sharp begun.

Mr. Middleton pricked up his ears and assumed a look of deep attention. He hoped the lawyer had got tired of his trust and wanted to resign the charge of the property to him, in which case he could charge a nice commission.

“I believe I told you on the occasion of my first visit that Tom’s fortune amounted to forty thousand dollars.”

“And a very nice, ample property,” murmured Mr. Middleton.

“But when it came into my charge it was invested in a way that seemed to me injudicious. For instance, Mr. Temple, Tom’s father, lent ten thousand dollars to a New York merchant, with absolutely no security—a very unbusiness-like proceeding.”

“Extremely so,” said Mr. Middleton.

"The merchant was a personal friend, and that was no doubt the motive that influenced Mr. Temple. Well, the merchant has failed, and his assets are next to nothing—possibly he may pay five cents on a dollar."

"Shocking!" exclaimed Nathan, who almost felt it a personal loss.

"We may as well count it a total loss. That is not all. Fifteen thousand dollars were invested in Western mining shares, which my late friend was induced to buy in the hope of making unheard-of dividends. For a time prospects were flattering, but investigations which I have been quietly making during the last three months satisfy me that they are little short of worthless. That's fifteen thousand dollars more gone."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Nathan dismally, for he saw that his young boarder would no longer be able to pay the handsome rate of board he had thus far received.

"That isn't all," said the lawyer.

"What, more losses?" groaned Nathan.

"I am sorry to answer in the affirmative. The remainder of the money, that is, all but a few hundred dollars, was invested in an assorted cargo, sent in conjunction with an old friend in trade, as a mercantile venture to India. I received tidings yesterday that the vessel—the Harbinger—is lost."

"But the insurance?" suggested Nathan eagerly.

"That can be recovered."

"It will be contested, and probably cannot be recovered. Some of the conditions of safety, it is alleged, were violated."

"Then Tom has lost all his fortune," said Mr. Middleton in consternation.

"It is more than likely," answered the lawyer gravely.

"It is a terrible misfortune," said Nathan, wiping his forehead with his red silk handkerchief. But he thought rather of the loss to himself than to Tom.

"Of course we must make some different arrangements for him."

"You said something was left, didn't you?" inquired Nathan.

"Yes; a few hundred dollars."

"That will pay his board a few months longer."

"And leave him penniless at the end! My dear sir, do you imagine he is in a situation to pay twenty dollars a week for board?"

"I might take him for a *little* less," said Nathan reluctantly.

"It would have to be a great deal less. These four hundred dollars—possibly five—are all that the boy is sure of. They must be husbanded. My idea is, that he should be sent to a cheap boarding-school for a year, or else begin to learn some business at once. Under the changed circumstances five dollars a week must be the limit charged for his board."

"I should lose money if I took him for that," said Nathan. "Besides I am sure Mrs. Middleton would not consent. He really has a great appetite, and he is very dainty about his victuals. Really you would be surprised to know how much my expenses are increased by his becoming a member of my family."

"He is a growing boy. I can readily believe that he is hearty."

"And he gives a great deal of trouble."

"I told you when you agreed to take him that he was not a model boy. I had no doubt he would give you trouble."

"He is very headstrong, and I really could not stand it unless—unless it was made worth my while."

"No doubt. Well, I don't think it best that he should stay in Plympton. He can't afford to pay you enough to make up for the trouble he will cause. I think it will be best that you send him at once to me."

"I'll send him to-morrow," said Nathan promptly, "but about the board due for the last month?" he inquired with anxiety.

"That shall be paid. Where is your bill?"

"I have got it here," said Nathan, considerably relieved. "The board comes to eighty-three dollars and thirty-four cents. Then I have spent five dollars and fifty-six cents besides for books, and I have charged fifty cents for a pane of glass which Tom broke in my kitchen window — altogether, eighty-nine dollars and forty cents."

"I will hand you a check for that amount and three dollars besides, which you may give to Tom for traveling expenses."

Nathan received the money with mingled joy and regret, the latter feeling being roused by the thought that it was the last money he would receive on Tom's account.

“And he’s a beggar after all,” said Nathan to himself as he rode homeward. “Who would have thought it? It’ll take down a little of his independence, I reckon. I a’n’t sorry as far as he’s concerned. His pride deserves to have a fall. But it’ll be a terrible loss to me.”

CHAPTER XIII.

NEWS AFFECTS TOM'S FRIENDS.



WHEN Nathan Middleton reached home at three o'clock in the afternoon, his face wore the look of mysterious importance that indicated the possession of a secret. His wife understood this at once, and asked immediately:

"What's happened, Nathan?"

"What's happened? Who said anything had happened?"

"Your looks said so."

"Perhaps my looks will tell you what it is."

"Nonsense, Mr. Middleton! Don't keep me in suspense."

"It's about Tom."

"What's he done?" asked the lady eagerly. "Anything bad?"

"I should say it would be bad for him—and for us too."

"Do tell me, Mr. Middleton, without beating around the bush all day."

"Then this is the long and short of it—he's lost his fortune."

"Good gracious! How!"

"Bad investments. It's a pity the money hadn't been placed in my hands."

"Has he lost forty thousand dollars?" ejaculated the lady.

"All but a few hundred dollars."

"Then he's got enough to pay his board a few months longer."

"Mr. Sharp says he must leave us at once or pay only five dollars a week."

"Five dollars a week! Ridiculous!"

"Of course it can't be, Corinthia. So he leaves us to-morrow morning."

"Did you get paid for this month?" asked Mrs. Middleton anxiously.

"Yes, I made sure of that."

"Well," said the lady. "It'll be a loss to us, but I ain't sorry for the boy. It'll be a good lesson for him with all his airs and importance. I'm glad he'll have to earn his own living."

"As far as that goes I'm not sorry myself," said Nathan.

"Does he know it?"

"Not yet."

"When are you going to tell him?"

"At supper."

"Be sure and tell him before me. I want to see how he stands it."

"I meant to, Corinthia. By the way, I think you needn't have any meat on at supper. He may as well begin at once to deny himself."

"A good suggestion, Mr. Middleton."

Just then the door was opened, and Squire Davenport was ushered in.

"I called to see you about renewing the insurance on my house, Mr. Middleton," said he.

"Glad to see you squire."

"Are you quite well, Mrs. Middleton? I needn't ask after your young ward. I left him at my house."

Mr. and Mrs. Middleton looked at each other. The former coughed.

"Tom leaves us to-morrow," said Nathan.

"Indeed! You surprise me," said the lawyer.

"Circumstances render it necessary for him to make different arrangements."

"Has he become tired of Plympton? James will miss him."

"I don't know that he has become tired of it, but he has lost his fortune, and is now a poor boy."

"You amaze me," ejaculated Squire Davenport. "I thought him rich."

"Three months ago he was worth forty thousand dollars."

"How has it been lost?"

"By bad investments. I'll tell you all I know about it," and Nathan repeated the information he had heard in the morning.

"Of course," he concluded, "he must now earn his own living."

"I see," said the lawyer. "How does he take it?"

"He doesn't know it."

"I'm glad he is to leave Plympton. Of course, I could no longer receive him at my house as the intimate companion of my son and daughter, if he is to be a working boy."

"Certainly not," said Nathan obsequiously. "Your children have a right to look higher."

"Of course," said the lawyer pompously. "While he was an heir to a handsome fortune, it was all very well, but social distinctions must be respected—eh, Mrs. Middleton?"

"You are quite right, I am sure, Squire Davenport," said Mrs. Middleton. "The boy may be a common laborer or mechanic."

"To be sure. Well, Mr. Middleton, I thank you for your information. It is well that he is not a few years older, or his evident admiration for Imogene might have led to unfortunate complications."

"No, doubt," said Nathan, though remembering the far from flattering terms in which Tom had often spoken of the young lady, he very much doubted whether there was any ground for such an apprehension.

An hour later Squire Davenport bent his steps homeward.

On the way he met Tom, just returning from his own house. Usually he had been very polite and gracious to our hero, but now he walked stiffly by, very slightly inclining his head, to Tom's decided amazement.

"What's up?" thought our hero. "He's as cold as an iceberg. What have I been doing, I wonder?"

Tom thought, but in vain. He had been unusually quiet for a week past, and could not imagine how he had offended the village magnate.

"I suppose I'll find out sometime," he thought. "Meanwhile I won't trouble myself about it."

A new surprise awaited our hero. Generally Mr. and Mrs. Middleton were quite deferential to him. Remembering the twenty dollars a week they thought it polite to treat him as well as possible.

Now when he opened the door, and was about to go up-stairs, Mrs. Middleton called out sharply:

"Wipe your feet, will you? Do you think I shall allow a peck of dust to be tracked up-stairs."

Tom stared at her in amazement.

"What do you stand gaping at?" demanded Corinthia in the same tone. "Didn't you hear what I said?"

"You spoke loud enough for me to hear," said Tom coolly. "Is anything the matter with you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I thought you might have eaten something that didn't agree with you," said Tom.

"Well, I declare!" ejaculated Mrs. Middleton. "You beat all for impudence!"

"I generally treat people well if they treat me well," said Tom composedly, "but if you are impudent to me, I shall answer accordingly."

This was too much for Mrs. Middleton. Had Tom still been rich, he would have had a right to assume such a tone, but in a poor boy it was intolerable.

"I'll tell Mr. Middleton how you treat me!" she said angrily.

"Do," said Tom, "if you want to."

"Nathan," called his wife, opening the door of the apartment in which her liege lord was reading.

"What is the matter, my dear?"

“Thomas has been impudent to me.”

“Thomas, this is a serious charge,” said Nathan severely.

Here was another surprise for Tom.

“It strikes me you are both crazy,” he said, looking from one to the other. “Settle it between you. I am going up-stairs.”

“Nathan, will you suffer him to insult me?” screamed Corinthia, showing signs of hysterics.

Tom did not hear the reply, as he was already entering his room.

“Something’s up,” he said to himself. “I wonder what it is.”

Tom’s curiosity was soon to be satisfied.

CHAPTER XIV.

TOM LEARNS WHAT IS UP.



WHEN Tom came down stairs to supper he was struck by the naked appearance of the table. The Middletons had returned to their old economical fare. Mr. Middleton looked sober, and his wife had a forbidding aspect.

"Very jolly this!" thought our hero as he sat down in his usual place.

"A little more milk, if you please," said Tom as Mrs. Middleton passed his tea, diluted by a spoonful of milk.

"I have given you as much as I take myself," said Corinthia sourly.

Tom reached over without a word, and taking the milk-pitcher, used what he wanted.

Mrs. Middleton's sallow face flushed.

"Did you see that, Mr. Middleton?" she demanded.

"I did, my dear."

"What do you think of it?"

"I think it very ill-bred."

Tom looked from one to the other attentively. He didn't know what to make of the change in their demeanor.

"Has milk risen in price?" he asked.

"No," said Mr. Middleton, embarrassed.

"Then why am I to be stinted? Don't I pay enough board to entitle me to a decent supply?"

This was a difficult question to answer. Whatever the future had in store for him, Tom was certainly at this moment paying twenty dollars a week for his board.

"You make a great fuss about your victuals," said Corinthia, not very elegantly.

"I don't care about being starved in order that you may make a little more money," retorted Tom.

"Do you hear that, Mr. Middleton?" ejaculated the lady angrily.

"Young man," said Mr. Middleton solemnly, "you should not speak lightly of starving. The time may come when you will want for food."

"The time has come already, it seems to me," said Tom with spirit. "I should like some meat."

"There is no meat on the table."

"I suppose there is some in the house," said Tom quietly.

"You can do without it," said Corinthia spitefully.

"Will you tell me if anything has happened?" asked Tom, laying down his knife and fork. "Probably there is some cause for your change of treatment."

"Something *has* happened," said Mrs. Middleton with a look of spiteful exultation.

"I should like to hear what it is."

"You have lost your fortune."

"That accounts for it," said Tom significantly. "I am no longer surprised. As I am rather interested, will you be kind enough to let me know all about it?"

"Tell him, Nathan," said Corinthia.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Middleton. "I regret to com-

municate bad tidings, but I was at Centerville this morning, and learned from Mr. Sharp that through the bad way in which your money was invested when it came into his hands, the whole has melted away, and you are a beggar."

"Not quite," said Tom proudly. "I may be poor, but no one will ever see me beg."

"You'll have to earn your own living," said Mrs. Middleton spitefully. "You won't find it for your interest to turn up your nose at your victuals."

"I am more likely to turn up my nose at the want of them—as to-night," answered Tom.

"You'll be lucky if you always fare as well."

"Perhaps so. Will you tell me, Mr. Middleton, if my whole fortune is gone? Is nothing left?"

"A few hundred dollars remain, I believe."

"That is better than nothing. So I must now **make my own way.**"

"I am glad you see it," sneered Corinthia.

"It seems to me rather a sudden collapse," said Tom thoughtfully. "I must ask Mr. Sharp about it."

"Mr. Sharp wishes you to come to Centerville tomorrow. You will find that my statement is perfectly correct."

"I don't doubt it," said Tom. "If you and Mrs. Middleton were not quite convinced that my fortune was gone, you wouldn't have treated me as you have this afternoon."

"Good gracious, Corinthia! Do you hear that?" ejaculated Nathan.

"I hear it, Mr. Middleton, and I am not surprised," said the lady venomously. "This is our reward for toiling day and night for this ungrateful boy. This is our reward for permitting him to upset all our plans and run riot through the house. And this is gratitude! Oh, heavens!"

"No, it isn't," said Tom. "I don't see any cause for gratitude, and I haven't pretended to feel any. You've had twenty dollars a week for my board, when I could get as good anywhere else for one-third the price, or some less. I think it's you that ought to be grateful."

"Do you hear that, Nathan? It's an outrage."

"I hear it, Corinthia, and I agree," said her husband solemnly.

"May I ask if I am paying at the rate of twenty dollars a week for this supper?" inquired Tom.

Mr. Middleton was in a quandary. The bill had been paid up to that day, but for the extra portion of a day he meant to deduct payment out of the three dollars which had been given for Tom's traveling expenses. He could not do this with any fairness unless decent meals were supplied.

"Corinthia," he said, "you had better send for some meat."

"Why should I? I don't think it necessary," said the lady reluctantly.

"I have my reasons, which you will acknowledge to be good. I will explain to you afterward."

Mrs. Middleton complied with her husband's request, but with no great show of willingness.

"As this is your last supper under my roof," he said to Tom while his wife was gone for the meat, "I wish you to be satisfied."

"Then I am not to return to Plympton?" said Tom.

"No; it will probably be necessary for you to work for your living at once. You may, perhaps, go into a shoe-shop, or learn the carpenter's trade."

"Did Mr. Sharp say that?"

"No; I only suggested it."

"Thank you. Perhaps you would take me into your office to learn the insurance business."

"Not with *my* consent," said Mrs. Middleton, who reappeared in time to hear Tom's question.

"I don't think it would be advisable," said Nathan.

"Then perhaps I shall have to go into a shoe-shop, as you suggest. If there should be an opening in Plympton, perhaps you would give me your trade for the sake of old times."

"Perhaps so," said Nathan dubiously.

Tom helped himself to the meat, and in spite of the bad news he had heard, displayed his usual good appetite.

"I really believe," Corinthia remarked afterward to her husband, "that boy would eat if the house was on fire."

"Very likely," said Nathan. "He's a strange boy."

At length Tom rose from the table.

"As I'm going to-morrow," he said, "I will make my farewell calls, and then come home and pack my trunk."

CHAPTER XV.

THE LESSON OF POVERTY.



HERE was another tea-table in Plympton where Tom's affairs were discussed the same afternoon. As the reader will conjecture, I refer to that of Lawyer Davenport.

"Was Thomas Temple here this afternoon?" he asked when they were all seated.

"Yes," said Imogene promptly.

"Imogene is setting her cap for him," said James.

"You should not tease your sister, James," said his mother. "It is perfectly natural that Tom should be polite to your sister. He is in her own social rank, and will possess a fine fortune. What do you say, Mr. Davenport?"

"That the intimacy had better cease," said the lawyer.

"Really, I can't understand your reasons," said Mrs. Davenport.

"What is the matter with Tom?" demanded Imogene.

"I have heard some news about him this afternoon," said the lawyer, "which influences me in what I have said."

"We shouldn't be too hard upon his boyish scrapes," said Mrs. Davenport charitably. "Boys will be boys."

"It isn't any boyish scrape."

"What is it, then?"

"Much worse than that. He has lost his entire fortune!"

"You don't mean it!" ejaculated his wife.

"It can't be true, papa," said Imogene.

"It is perfectly true. I had it from Mr. Middleton, and he received the information this very day from Mr. Sharp, the boy's guardian."

"But how could he lose it?" asked James.

"By bad investments and the failure of large creditors."

"Has he lost everything?"

"All but a few hundred dollars."

"Of course, that alters the case very much," said Mrs. Davenport. "He is a poor boy now."

"To be sure. He will have to work for a living. Probably he will become a common mechanic."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Imogene, with a shudder.

"Of course, he is no fit companion for our children now."

"Certainly not," said Mrs. Davenport decidedly.

"I am not sorry," said James. "I never liked him. I always thought him low."

"I hope, Imogene," said her mother, "you won't think of encouraging his visits now," said her mother.

"He is far below you in the social scale."

"I understand that well enough, mother. I should not be willing to associate with a working boy."

"Right, my love! I see that you cherish sentiments worthy of my daughter. There is nothing like having a proper sense of your own dignity."

"You won't have to complain of me," said Imogene, tossing her head.

"Nor of me," said James. "I'll keep him at a distance, never fear."

"If he persists in coming here, you must tell him decidedly that he is not wanted," said Mrs. Davenport.

"There will be no difficulty," said the lawyer. "He is to leave town at once, and probably Mr. Sharp will find him a place."

"I am glad of that."

"I am not," said James. "I should like to see him working at some trade here in town, so that I could snub him and so pay him off for his independent airs."

The family had just risen from the supper-table when Tom was ushered into the room by the servant. The four who had been discussing him and his affairs looked at each other in a significant manner. Tom was sharp enough to see that the change in his fortunes was known, and he smiled to himself.

"Good-evening, Thomas," said the lawyer, in a reserved tone. "Do you bring any message from Mr. Middleton?"

"No, I don't," said Tom independently. "I board with Mr. Middleton. I don't carry messages for him."

"It appears to me that you exhibit an unbecoming pride," said the village magnate.

"Do I?" cried Tom. "I was only stating a fact, which you didn't appear to understand. I came on my own business. You may know that I am to leave Plympton to-morrow."

"Have you got a place yet?" asked James with a sneer.

"What kind of a place?"

"I had an idea that you were going to learn a trade."

"Did you? Where did you get the idea from?"

"You've lost your money, haven't you?"

"So they say."

"And have got to earn your living."

"You appear to know all about my affairs. Probably you're right. Perhaps you could assist me by some suggestion."

"If we hadn't a stable-boy already, I would ask father to take you."

"Thank you," said Tom quietly. "It's a good thing to have friends when you're hard up, but I don't think I'll trouble you. There is one favor you can do me, however."

"If James can conscientiously do you a favor," said the lawyer guardedly, "I shall not object to his doing it."

"Oh, it won't hurt his conscience," said Tom laughing. "At any rate it ought not."

"I think the tone you employ is hardly appropriate, as you are going to ask a favor."

"What is it?" asked James, who felt rather curious, and had no idea what Tom meant. If he had he would not have felt so complacent.

"Why," said Tom, "I feel a little delicate, but as I am leaving Plympton, and am likely to need the money, I should like to have James pay me the money I have lent him at different times."

James flushed and looked uncomfortable. His father asked hastily:

"James, have you borrowed money of Thomas?"

"I borrowed a trifle on two or three occasions," James admitted reluctantly.

"A trifle! How much?"

"Here is the statement," said Tom. "It amounts to fifteen dollars and a half altogether."

"It can't be!" said James.

"You may look over the items," said Tom.

"Give me the paper," said the lawyer.

"James, is this correct?" he demanded rather sternly.

"I am almost sure it isn't," said James. "I am sure he has put down more than I borrowed."

"You know that is false, James Davenport," said Tom contemptuously.

"I didn't think you were so mean as to get everything down," said James.

"I did it because I always keep an account of the money I spend," said Tom; "but I will tell you frankly I should never have asked you to repay it, if you had not chosen to sneer at my loss of fortune."

"Did you expect my son to treat you just the same as when you were rich?" asked Mr. Davenport.

"No, for I knew him too well," said Tom significantly.

"He has acted in a manner entirely proper," said Mrs. Davenport with emphasis, "and I venture to say that my daughter, Imogene, agrees with me."

"I do, ma," said Imogene.

"Right, my daughter," said her mother approvingly.

Tom looked at Imogene attentively, but made no comment. He expressed no surprise, for he felt none.

"If you were about to remain in Plympton," said Mrs. Davenport, "I should feel compelled to say that my son and daughter could no longer associate with you on terms of equality."

"It is fortunate that I am going then," said Tom. "I really don't think I could live in Plympton if I were deprived of their society."

"You might see us occasionally if you became our stable-boy," said James.

"Thank you," said Tom, "but I must decline. I am afraid you would want to borrow all my wages."

"You are impertinent," said James angrily.

"So are you," said Tom with spirit.

"Hush, James!" said his father. "Such discussion is unseemly. In regard to these sums you have lent my son, Thomas," he proceeded, "I should be justified in refusing to repay them, since they were lent to a minor, who, in the eyes of the law, has no right to contract debts."

"Do as you like," said Tom. "If you are unwilling to pay it, James may regard it as a present from me."

"I should not wish my son to remain under such an obligation, and I am quite aware that your present circumstances will not justify you in making so large a present, or indeed any at all. I therefore repay you."

Tom received the bank-notes and put them in his pocket-book.

“Thank you,” he said, “both for the money and the consideration for my poverty. I won’t occupy any more of your time, but will bid you all good-by. I should be glad to have you send good-by to Mary Somers when you write.”

“I’ll do it,” said James. “By the way, you would be a good match for her. She hasn’t got a cent, and can’t expect anything better than being a mechanic’s wife.”

“Would you be willing to accept a mechanic for a cousin?” asked Tom, smiling.

“We shouldn’t need to be intimate.”

“Very true. That’s a comfort. But we won’t look too far ahead. Good-by.”

And Tom withdrew.

“What a ridiculous pride that boy has,” said Mrs. Davenport.

“He’s very impudent,” said James.

“I’m glad he’s gone,” said Imogene.

“Very probably you will never meet again,” said her father; “if you do, you can be very distant.”

Poor Tom! A few hours had made a great difference in the demeanor of the Davenports toward him. Such is life!

CHAPTER XVI.

NEW PLANS.



T MUST not be supposed that Tom cared nothing for the loss of his fortune. He was old enough to know the value of money, and to realize the great difference it would make in the life that lay before him. But he was one of those who think it foolish to cry over spilled milk, and he at once resolved to make the best of his position. As to the loss of such friends as the Davenports, he cared little. He had always understood that they cared for him only because he was rich, and he was neither astonished nor disappointed at the change which had come over them.

He made two other calls and then returned to his boarding-house. He went up-stairs to his room and packed his trunk. As he was thus engaged, Mr. Middleton tapped at the door.

"Come in," said Tom.

Mr. Middleton entered.

"There is a little matter I wished to speak to you about," said Nathan.

"Very well, sir."

"Mr. Sharp paid your board-bill up to to-day."

"Very well, sir."

"But there will be one day over, for which no pay has been received."

"Oh!" said Tom; "there will be no difficulty about that. Tell me how much it is, and I will pay you."

Mr. Middleton coughed.

"It can be settled another way," he said. "Mr. Sharp handed me three dollars for your traveling expenses. I can take it out of that."

"Just as you like."

"I find," proceeded Nathan, "that one-seventh of twenty dollars is two dollars and eighty-six cents. I will, therefore, hand you fourteen cents, and that will make us square."

Tom's lip curled, for he fully appreciated Mr. Middleton's meanness.

"Never mind about the change," he said. "Keep the three dollars."

"I am quite ready to pay you the fourteen cents," said Nathan.

"It's of no consequence. Keep it to remember me by."

"I *shall* remember you, Thomas," said Mr. Middleton, whose heart was touched by the unexpected gift.

"I am really sorry that circumstances are to separate us."

"No doubt you'll miss my money," thought Tom; but it was his rule to treat others as they treated him, and he answered politely:

"I should prefer to have kept my money, but I must take things as they come."

"You may get a part of your money back; if you do, I shall be happy to receive you back into my family on the same terms."

"I can't tell what my plans will be," said Tom, who could not pretend that he wished to return. "If I should desire to return, I will write to you."

Mr. Middleton on second thoughts had thought it best to treat our hero well, as there was no knowing but some of the bad investments might turn out better than was expected.

Tom went to bed early. The next morning the Centerville stage drove round to the door, and he got on board. Mr. Middleton bade him a cordial farewell, but Mrs. Middleton had less hopes of the restoration of his fortunes. She coldly said good-by, and Tom shed no tears at parting.

Before twelve o'clock he entered Mr. Sharp's office.

"Glad to see you, Tom," said the lawyer, rising quickly. "I suppose you've heard the news?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am heartily sorry," said the lawyer. "I hope you don't think it my fault."

"I haven't heard the particulars," said Tom; "but I felt sure you were not to blame."

"Sit down, and I'll tell you all about it," said Mr. Sharp.

"I was going to ask that favor," said Tom. "I didn't get a very clear idea from Mr. Middleton as to what had happened, or rather how it happened. He told me I had only a few hundred dollars to look to now."

"I hope it will be better than that. Ten thousand dollars were lent to Archibald Armstrong, a New York

merchant, who has failed. His estate will pay something, though very little. If only ten per cent., that would amount to a thousand. That's something."

"To be sure it is," said Tom.

"Then you have fifteen thousand dollars invested in mining shares. They are worth very little, but they will sell for something."

"Do you think I shall get ten per cent. on these?"

"I think you will."

"Why, that will be fifteen hundred more! Really, things are not so bad as they might be," said Tom cheerfully.

"I am glad you take it so well, Tom. But I can't offer you any hope of realizing anything from the balance. It was invested in merchandise shipped to a foreign port, and the vessel, we have every reason to believe, is lost."

"Not much chance there," said Tom.

"We had better give up all hopes in that quarter. As to the other items, you may depend upon my doing my best for you."

"Thank you," said Tom warmly. "It is pleasant to get a little sympathy. I didn't get much in Plympton."

"From Mr. Middleton, you mean."

"Yes, and others. Mr. and Mrs. Middleton are both as mean as they can well be. Notwithstanding the liberal board I paid, they tried to starve me at first, but I wouldn't stand it, and they had to improve their fare."

"Didn't they express any sorrow at losing you?"

"Oh, they were sorry enough, but it was at losing

the money. Then there was a lawyer's family, who were very polite and attentive to me while I was rich; but as soon as they learned of my reverses, they tried to look down upon me, but they didn't succeed very well," said Tom, with satisfaction. "I gave them as good as they sent."

"I'll warrant that, Tom," said Mr. Sharp, laughing. "You generally do."

"I'd like to get rich again just to turn the tables on them," said Tom thoughtfully.

"You must take the world as you find it," said the lawyer. "There are more selfish than unselfish people in it. But you musn't jump to the conclusion that all men are mercenary."

"I am sure they are not," said Tom.

"Keep your confidence in human nature, my boy, and you will be happier. Don't become a cynic. It would only make you unhappy. Besides it would be unjust to the large number of really excellent people, some of whom I hope you will meet. But to come back to your affairs, what would you like to do?"

"What can I do?"

"You can go to a boarding-school a year without exceeding the money I have to your credit. Then if you realize what I think probable, you can continue yet longer, and still have something to begin the world with."

Tom looked thoughtful.

"I am sixteen," he said, "and my education is good, though it might be better. I have thought I should like to seek my fortune in the world."

“ Don’t decide hastily, Tom. Another year at school would do you good.”

“ I know it, and I will take time to consider. But I must know more of the world first. Give me fifty dollars, and let me go to New York and look about me. It will keep me there a fortnight. During that time I will look around and decide how to spend the next year.”

“ You have my consent, Tom,” said the lawyer. “ The city abounds in temptations, but you are sixteen, and I trust to your good sense to keep clear of them. When do you want to go ? ”

“ To-morrow,” said Tom promptly.

“ Very well. You will stay at my house to-day, and you can take the morning train for the city to-morrow. The money shall be ready.”

CHAPTER XVII.

TOM ARRIVES IN NEW YORK.



OM REACHED New York about noon. It was a bright, pleasant day, and he was in excellent spirits, although he had just lost a fortune. This was partly due, no doubt, to the pleasure which he anticipated from his visit to the great city.

It was not his first visit, but he had not been in it for six years, and then he only stayed a day. To all intents and purposes it was new to him, for he remembered very little about it.

As Tom left the cars with a small carpet-bag in his hand, he was accosted by the hackmen.

“Have a carriage, sir?”

“How much do you charge?” asked our hero.

“Two dollars.”

If Tom had still been rich, he would probably have said yes, and got into the cab, but he felt the need of economy, and he declined.

A thin, sallow man of thirty-five heard the colloquy between Tom and the hack-driver.

“You are right, my young friend,” said he, stepping to Tom’s side, “not to take a carriage. These hackmen are extortionate.”

“Two dollars seems rather a steep price,” said Tom.

“ It is. Very likely they’d have charged you five at the end of the route. The city is full of sharpers.”

“ Is it?” asked Tom, with interest.

“ I regret to say it is. Are you a stranger in New York?”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ If I can be of any service to you—I am a merchant from Buffalo, to be here a few days on business—I will with pleasure. I have a nephew of your age.”

“ Thank you,” said Tom. “ Can you recommend a good hotel—not too dear?”

“ Up town or down?”

“ Down.”

“ Suppose you go to French’s. It’s on the European system. You pay for your room so much a day, and extra for meals.”

“ I’ll try it,” said Tom.

“ Then come with me, I’m going there myself. It isn’t far. We can walk.”

“ I should like that. It will give me a chance to see something of the city.”

So the two walked together till they reached French’s Hotel, at the corner of Frankfort Street, facing City Hall Park.

“ I suppose we could get a better room if we took one together,” said the stranger.

Tom hesitated. He didn’t altogether like the arrangement, but it seemed ungracious to refuse.

“ Very well,” he said.

“ Then put down your name in the books.”

Tom with some pride, for he had never before stayed at a hotel, wrote in the hotel register, "Thomas Temple, Centerville," in a bold, round hand.

Underneath his companion scrawled the name, "Samuel Livingston, Buffalo."

"Give us a good double-room," he said to the clerk.

"No. 157," said the clerk, calling a servant. "Show these gentlemen up to No. 157."

They were shown into a room of good size, comfortably furnished. Tom, who was dusty, refreshed himself by washing his face and hands.

"Are you hungry?" asked Mr. Livingston.

"I've got rather a healthy appetite," said Tom.

"After you've washed we'll go down into the refectory and have some dinner. It will be more social dining together."

"Just as you like."

"You must be my guest at dinner."

"Thank you," said Tom, "but I would rather pay for my own dinner."

"Oh, don't be squeamish."

"I don't like to accept favors from a stranger."

"Then to ease your scruples, I will take supper with you."

Tom would prefer to have paid his own way independently of Mr. Livingston, but as the latter said, it would amount to very much the same thing, so he made no further objections.

They adjourned to the refectory, and although it was not yet one o'clock, both exhibited a hearty appetite.

But prices were reasonable, and the united tickets only came to one dollar and a half.

"Give me the checks," said Livingston to the waiter.

He opened his pocket-book and examined its contents.

"On second thought," he said, "my young friend, I will suggest a change in our arrangements. You may pay for the dinner and I will pay for the supper."

Tom looked surprised, and he explained:

"You see," he continued, in an off-hand tone, "I've got a check here for six hundred dollars, which I am going to get cashed. Besides this, I have only a little change."

"Will you show me the check?" asked Tom, who had become rather suspicious.

"To be sure," said his companion.

He exhibited a check on the Park Bank, which looked all right. It was payable to bearer, and was in the sum of six hundred dollars, as he alleged.

Tom's suspicions were allayed. He concluded that his new friend was all right, and settled the bill.

"Where are you going this afternoon?" asked Livingston.

"I shall walk around the city a little," said Tom.

"I'm sorry I can't go with you. I have some goods to buy and some other business to attend to, but I'll meet you in the reading-room at six o'clock and we'll go down to supper."

"Very well," said Tom. "That will suit me well enough."

"Hope you'll have a good time. I am glad I tell in

with you. I don't often take up with strangers, but I took a fancy to you at first sight."

Tom felt that he ought to be grateful for this compliment, though he could not reciprocate it. Glancing critically at Mr. Livingston, he acknowledged to himself that he was not a man to whom he would have felt attracted. Of course he answered politely, and they separated.

As he stepped outside of the hotel he looked about him a little, and thus attracted the attention of a boot black.

"Shine your boots, boss?" asked Johnny.

"Go ahead," said Tom.

The job was accomplished, and Tom thrust his hand into his pocket.

"What's to pay?" he asked

"A quarter."

"What?"

"Twenty-five cents."

"Do you think I'll pay such a price as that?" asked Tom indignantly.

"Reg'lar price, mister," said the unprincipled young rascal, who knew from Tom's appearance that he was a stranger. "Reg'lar price, isn't it, Micky?"

"'Course it is," said the confederate. "You don't live in the city, mister, or you'd know."

But Tom's sharp eyes detected a gentleman near him paying ten cents for a similar service, and he quietly tendered the same amount to the boy.

"You ain't so green as you look, mister," said the latter, with a grin.

“ Thank you,” said Tom. “ You’ll have to try that game on somebody else. Do you often succeed?”

“ Sometimes,” said the boy.”

“ If a quarter was the regular price, I’d go into the business myself,” said Tom.

“ Maybe you couldn’t pay the license,” said the knight of the blacking-brush.

“ How much is it?”

“ Five hundred dollars.”

“ If that’s all, I’ll buy two,” said Tom.

“ I’ll sell you mine.”

“ I don’t want one second-hand.”

“ You’ll do,” said the street boy. “ You’ve got your eye-teeth cut.”

“ I think I shall need to learn in this city,” thought Tom, “ where even the boys in the street try to swindle me.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.



TOM STROLLED about the lower part of the city, keeping his eyes wide open. He must have walked several miles, but he did not feel tired. There was so much to see, and everything was so different from the quiet villages in which he had lived hitherto, that he was delighted and fascinated.

"I wonder if I couldn't get a place here?" thought our hero.

He determined to see the city pretty thoroughly, and then decide.

A little before five o'clock he went back to the hotel. He sat in the reading-room, reading the papers, till six o'clock, when Livingston entered.

"How long have you been here, Temple?" he asked.

"About an hour, Livingston," said Tom coolly.

Livingston laughed.

"You mean to be even with me," he said.

"It's a poor rule that won't work both ways," said Tom.

"That's where your head's level, my son. Shall we go down to supper?"

"Have you cashed that check?" asked Tom cautiously.

"Yes," said the other, laughing. "I see you are sharp."

"I find I have to be," said Tom.

"Well, you won't have to pay for supper. By the way, I've done considerable business."

"Have you?"

"I've purchased two thousand dollars worth of goods."

"With six hundred dollars?"

"Sharp, again, my son. You don't understand business. I pay twenty-five per cent down, and get ninety days' credit for the balance."

"That's five hundred cash."

"Precisely. You'll make a smart business man. Why won't you come out to Buffalo and go into my employ?"

"I think I would prefer a place here."

"If you change your mind, let me know."

"I don't think I would like to be in your employ," thought Tom. "I don't like your appearance well enough."

Of course he did not say this.

They sat down to the supper, which proved to be a less expensive meal than dinner. The charge for both was out seventy-five cents.

Livingston walked up and settled it.

"I made something by paying for supper instead of dinner," he said, showing his teeth. "But, to make it even, I'll pay for breakfast too."

"No, thank you," said Tom. "I don't like that way. We will eat together, if you wish it, but we will each pay his own bill."

"Oh, just as you like. It will save me something," said Livingston carelessly.

"How are you going to spend the evening?" he asked as they were going up-stairs.

"I shall stay in the hotel. I am tired, and shall go to bed early.

"I shall probably go to some theater," said Livingston. "Won't you join me?"

"I guess not," said Tom.

"Then good-night. I suppose you will be asleep when I come in."

"Good-night."

Tom went into the billiard-room a while and watched the playing. Then he read the papers once more. About nine o'clock he went up to his room.

"I wish I hadn't taken a room with this Livingston," he thought to himself. "He may be all he pretends to be, but he is a stranger, and it may be dangerous to trust him. Suppose he should be a swindler?"

This set Tom to thinking. He had about seventy dollars with him, including the fifty he had received from Mr. Sharp.

"What's to prevent his taking this money when I am asleep?" he considered.

By way of precaution, Tom took out all the money but five dollars from his pocket-book and tucked it into one of his stockings. His watch he tucked into the other. These he concealed beneath the sheet at the bottom of the bed.

"It won't do any harm," he thought, "though it may

be unnecessary. My friend Livingston wouldn't feel particularly complimented if he knew what I am doing; but I mean to keep him from temptation."

More easy in mind after he had taken these precautions, Tom composed himself to sleep. It was not long before he was unconscious, for his walk had made him weary, though he did not realize it at the time.

How long he slept Tom did not know, but it was actually about twelve o'clock when he awoke, and by the moonlight that streamed in through the window, detected Livingston examining his pockets. He had placed his clothes on a chair beside the bed. If Tom had not foreseen that this might happen, he would probably have been startled. As it was, he was rather amused when he pictured to himself Livingston's disappointment at his small booty. Desirous of getting all the fun he could out of it, he pretended to be asleep still.

Livingston at that moment was opening Tom's pocket-book. The moonlight was sufficient to show him the contents.

"Confound it!" Tom heard him mutter; "the boy's only got five dollars. It isn't worth half the trouble I've taken. The young beggar! I thought, to be sure, he had thirty or forty dollars with him, judging from his clothes. However, I'll take the five. His watch will make up, perhaps. I can get something at the pawnbroker's for it."

He felt for the watch, but did not find it.

"Where's the boy put it?" Tom heard him mutter. "It certainly isn't here."

Apparently Livingston concluded that it might be under his pillow, for he begun to search there. This did not altogether suit our hero, and he purposely made a noise, as if on the point of waking up. It answered the purpose. Livingston cautiously retreated, and as Tom changed his position in bed so as to face him, he seemed to conclude that it was best to give up the search.

"So he's a swindler too!" thought Tom. "He warned me that the city was full of them, and I find he's right. Of course his story about being a merchant from Buffalo, and buying two thousand dollars' worth of goods, is all a lie."

Tom lay awake half an hour. At the end of that time, judging from the deep breathing that Livingston was asleep, he allowed himself to fall asleep too. When he woke up it was six o'clock in the morning. His companion was still asleep. Tom quietly dressed himself, and then went to Livingston's bedside and shook him.

"Eh! what's the matter?" demanded the merchant from Buffalo, opening his eyes. "Oh, it's you, is it? What makes you get up so early?"

"I went to bed early, you know," said Tom. "By the way, Mr. Livingston, I'll trouble you for that money you borrowed of me last night."

"I—borrowed money! You must be crazy," said Livingston, looking uncomfortable.

"I saw you open my pocket-book and take out a five-dollar bill," said Tom coolly. "I shall need it, and must ask you to return it."

“Do you mean to insult me?” blustered Livingston.

“By no means,” said Tom. **“You probably got up in your sleep. Give me the money, and I’ll say nothing about it.”**

“I do sometimes get up in my sleep,” said Livingston, who felt that he must surrender at discretion. **“If I find the bill, I shall know I did.”**

He felt in his vest pocket and produced the bill.

“By gracious, that’s strange!” said he, **“I wouldn’t have believed it. Why didn’t you wake me up when you saw me?”**

“I thought I wouldn’t disturb you.”

“It’s a good joke, my robbing you in my sleep,” said Livingston, with a forced laugh.

“Capital!” said Tom. **“But I think I’ll have to take another room; it makes me nervous to occupy the same room with a sleep-walker.”**

“Just as you like, Temple. What a joke it was! Ha! ha!”

“It might have been something else than a joke,” thought Tom, as he went down stairs. **“You’d better take the first train for Buffalo, old chap!”**

CHAPTER XIX.

TOM MAKES A PROPOSAL.



OM SPENT the following three days in making himself familiar with localities in New York. He procured a pocket-map of the city, and guiding himself by it, walked about to so much good purpose that at the end of four days he knew more about the streets and public buildings than many who have lived in the city as many months.

It was in the afternoon of the fourth day that Tom was walking through the lower part of Pearl Street, when he found himself passing in front of a warehouse, on which was the firm name of Richard Armstrong & Co.

“Richard Armstrong,” repeated Tom. “Why, that must be the merchant to whom my father lent ten thousand dollars. By his failure one-quarter of my property is gone.”

There might, of course, be another Richard Armstrong, but Tom was impressed with the idea that this was the man—his father’s friend.

He paused before the entrance.

“Shall I go in,” he thought. “Perhaps I shall hear something that will give me a clearer idea of my prospects.”

A clerk brushed by him as this thought entered his mind, saying rather impertinently:

"What business have you here, boy? Don't you know any better than to fill up this passage-way?"

Tom was spirited, and in the habit of standing up for his rights. He decided, upon the moment, to go in.

"I have as much business here as you," he retorted, and followed the clerk in.

"Have you, indeed?" sneered the clerk.

"I have," said Tom quietly. "Is Mr. Armstrong in?"

"Yes, he is; but he can't see you."

"How do you know?"

"He's busy."

"I think he'll see me," said Tom. "Please hand him that card and let me know what he says."

The clerk was half-inclined to refuse, but in spite of his reluctance, he felt constrained to obey.

"It's likely Mr. Armstrong will allow himself to be interrupted by an errand-boy," he said sneeringly.

"I suppose you mean yourself," said Tom quickly.

"No, I don't," said the other, provoked; "I mean you."

"Then you're mistaken. I am not an errand-boy."

"Are you a newsboy or boot-black? If you've got a bill against Mr. Armstrong for blacking his boots it won't be necessary for you to see him."

"I don't black boots," said Tom. "Sometimes I do a little in blacking eyes."

"You're the cheekiest youngster I've met lately."

"And you're the most impudent clerk."

The young man would have replied, but a voice from an inner room called him, and he hurried away.

"I wonder whether he'll do my errand," thought Tom. "If he doesn't, I'll make a fuss."

But the card was delivered. The clerk was actuated partly by curiosity, partly by the desire to carry back to Tom a curt refusal. But he was rather astonished when his employer, with a look of interest, said:

"Tom Temple! bring him in at once."

"You're to go in," said the clerk, coming out and calling Tom.

"I told you so," said Tom quietly.

"I wonder what business he has anyhow," thought the clerk, "or who he is. He's an impudent chap."

Entering the counting-room, Tom found himself in the presence of a stout, dignified-looking man of about forty-five years of age.

"Are you Tom Temple?" asked the merchant abruptly.

"Yes, sir," said Tom respectfully.

"I am glad to see you. Take a seat. Your father was my intimate friend. I was several years older than he, but we went to school together."

"I have heard him say so, sir."

"You find me under a cloud," said the merchant, a shadow sweeping over his face. "Perhaps you have heard of my failure."

"Yes, sir, I have," said Tom.

"I suppose you know also that you are one of my creditors."

"I have heard that also, sir," said Tom; "but I am sure that your failure is the result of misfortune, and I

have called to express my sympathy for my father's friend."

"Thank you, my boy," said the merchant warmly, grasping the hand of our hero. "You say this with the full knowledge that you have lost a large sum by me?"

"Yes, sir."

"You remind me of your father—a noble, generous man, and a true friend. I regret more than before that you are involved in my losses."

"Don't think too much of it, sir."

"I will at any rate give you some explanation of my failure, so that you may know that it was as much my misfortune as an error of judgment."

"I don't ask any explanation, Mr. Armstrong," said Tom, who was quite won over by the merchant's friendly manner.

"I would rather be understood—by you, at least. You must know, then, that though I had met with considerable losses, which had of course crippled me, I should still have remained solvent but for the treachery of a clerk in whom I reposed the utmost confidence."

"Indeed, sir!" said Tom, surprised.

"One morning I had some very heavy payments to make," the merchant proceeded. "I had, however, a considerable sum in bank, and valuable securities convertible at a moment's notice, sufficient to provide for the balance required. At twelve o'clock I sent the clerk to the bank with a check. He didn't return. I waited in the utmost anxiety for him to come back, but he had

drawn the money, abstracted the securities, and taken to flight. Money was tight. I was unable to provide for my notes. The day passed, and I was a bankrupt."

"How much did this man carry away with him?" asked Tom, interested.

"In money and securities, about one hundred thousand dollars."

"Have you heard nothing from him since?"

"I have reason to think he is concealed somewhere in California."

"Why don't you pursue him?" asked Tom energetically.

"I can't go myself. I have communicated with detectives there, but I have not much faith in their success."

"It would be better to send a special agent."

"Perhaps so, but I should not know whom to send."

Tom's thoughts had been busy. A strange plan had entered his mind.

"Send me, Mr. Armstrong," he said; "*I will try to find him for you.*"

CHAPTER XX.

AN IMPORTANT CONFERENCE.



THE MERCHANT stared at Tom in undisguised amazement.

"Send you!" he repeated.

"Yes, sir," said Tom composedly. "My time is at my disposal, and it is necessary for me to do something."

"Necessary to do something? Have you no other property than that which I have lost for you?"

"No," said Tom, "or very little. I too have met with losses."

He set forth the condition of his affairs briefly. The merchant listened attentively.

"I am very sorry for you," he said. "Without any fault of your own, you are reduced to comparative poverty."

"Yes, sir," said Tom, "but I don't let it trouble me. I am sorry, of course, but I can make my way."

"I think you can," said Mr. Armstrong, observing him attentively. "You look like one who is destined to succeed. If I were where I was a month ago, I would take you into my employ, and give you a start in life."

"Can't you do it now, sir?"

"I shall be compelled to wind up my business."

"I mean, can't you employ me to find the clerk who has defrauded you?"

"How old are you, Tom?" asked the merchant abruptly.

"Sixteen, sir."

"And you really think a boy of sixteen can succeed in such a difficult task?" demanded the merchant incredulously.

"Yes, sir," said Tom confidently. "He would have one advantage over an older person."

"What is that?"

"He would be less likely to excite suspicion of his errand."

"That is true," said Mr. Armstrong thoughtfully.

"Then, sir, are you willing to send me?" asked Tom eagerly.

"I am afraid I am not in a position to send anybody," said the merchant.

"Why not, sir?"

"Do you forget that my estate belongs to my creditors? I am a bankrupt."

"But your creditors are interested in your finding the clerk."

"True; but they may consider it a wild-goose chase."

"I don't, and I am one of them."

"If I could recover that money," said the merchant reflectively, "I could pay my creditors dollar for dollar."

Tom pricked up his ears.

"Then you could pay me back ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes, and with interest."

"Then I'll go on speculation," said Tom resolutely.

"How can you go? It will cost money."

"I know that, sir, but I have a few hundred dollars left."

"You will have more, my boy. I feel confident, even as it is, of paying thirty cents on the dollar."

"Why," said Tom, "that would be three thousand dollars."

"You are right."

"Capital!" exclaimed our hero. "I feel rich already. Mr. Sharp thought you would only pay five per cent."

"Mr. Sharp was misinformed."

"I am glad to hear it. Suppose, then, I spend the four hundred dollars cash I take with me, I shall have something to fall back upon."

"Yes."

"Then I'll do it—that is, if Mr. Sharp consents."

"I am afraid you will soon get to the end of your small stock of money, Tom."

"Oh, I mean to earn money as well as spend it. When I get to California I shall see what I can find to do."

"You seem to be an energetic young man."

"I hope I shall prove so. It is time, for I never earned a penny in my life; but if you are willing, I should like to ask you a few questions, Mr. Armstrong?"

"Go on."

"How shall I know this clerk if I happen to come across him?"

"You want me to describe him? Let me see. He is about five feet six in height, of rather stout build, dark in complexion, has a cast in the left eye."

"Wait a moment, sir. I should like to write that down."

And Tom, producing a pencil, wrote down the description.

"Is there anything else, sir?"

"He usually wears an emerald ring on the middle finger of his right hand, but it might occur to him to throw this aside. However, there is one thing that he could not lay aside."

"What is that, sir?"

"He had a scar on the back of his left hand, the result of a burn. This is a permanent mark."

"Good," said Tom. "He will be easily recognized. How old is he?"

"Probably about thirty-five."

"What colored hair?"

"Black."

"Thank you, sir. You've given me all the information I need, except the name."

"His name is Samuel Lincoln, but as he will undoubtedly change it, the information will do you little good."

"It is as well to know it," said Tom, noting it down.

"Yes, no information will come amiss; but Tom I must warn you that I may be mistaken in thinking he has gone to California."

"I'll risk it," said Tom. "Something tells me that he is there. If I had stolen money that is where I would go."

Mr. Armstrong laughed.

"I hope you'll never be under the necessity," he said.
"When do you propose to start?"

"Next Monday," answered Tom, "if I can. I must go and see Mr. Sharp first."

"Shall I see you again?"

"I will come if I need any more information. I will write you from California. Good-morning, sir."

"Good-morning, Tom, and good luck, for both our sakes."

As Tom passed through the outer room he saw the clerk who had admitted him surveying him curiously.

"Good-by," said Tom. "You see I had some business here after all."

"I shouldn't think Mr. Armstrong would waste his wind with a boy like you."

"Shouldn't you? He has intrusted me with a confidential mission."

"I don't believe any such nonsense."

"Just as you like," said Tom carelessly.

"I'd like to have that boy under me," muttered the clerk. "I'd cure him of his impudence."

CHAPTER XXI.

BOUND FOR CALIFORNIA.



WHAT do you think of my plan, Mr. Sharp?" asked Tom, after describing in detail his proposed journey.

"It is likely to be rather a wild-goose chase, Tom."

"I expected you would say so."

"But you want my consent, nevertheless?"

"Yes, sir."

"As your mind is fixed upon it, I will not interpose any objections, but I have not the slightest expectation that you will succeed."

"Even if I do not," urged Tom, "I shall enjoy the journey."

"And spend your money."

"Not all of it."

"Remember you have but a few hundred dollars with me."

"Mr. Armstrong told me that he should probably be able to pay me thirty cents on a dollar. That will be three thousand dollars. So, you see, I shall have something to fall back upon when I return."

"I am glad to hear it. It is much better than I anticipated."

"Besides, I shall only ask you to give me a hundred dollars, beside paying for my ticket."

"Then you won't have enough to pay for returning."

"I mean to earn that," said Tom confidently.

"You may not be as fortunate as you expect."

"I am not afraid," said Tom, "if I have my health. If I get sick, I will write to you."

"When do you want the money?"

"At once, if possible. I want to sail by the next steamer."

"The money shall be ready. I am not sure that I am doing right in humoring your whim, but a willful lad must have his way. By the way, Tom, I want to give you one piece of advice."

"What is that, sir?"

"You know the name you have here?"

"The Bully of the Village," said Tom, smiling.

"Yes. I am afraid you have deserved it. Now that you have assumed a man's responsibilities, I hope you will give up your domineering spirit, and have a greater regard for the rights of others."

"I mean to," said Tom. "I think it has done me good to lose my fortune. I feel twice as old and twice as much confidence in myself as before."

"That is well, but your success in life will depend largely upon the favorable impression you make upon others. If you still play the bully, you cannot expect to be liked."

"I dare say you are right, sir," said Tom thoughtfully. "I will remember what you say. But there is one thing I cannot give up."

"What is that?"

"I mean to stand up for my rights. I won't let anybody bully over me."

"Be sure you don't make any mistake about your rights. Some claim more than they are entitled to. You see I speak plainly."

"Thank you, sir. I have no doubt you speak for my good. I will remember what you say."

A week later Tom was a passenger on a steamer bound for California. He had got over his first feeling of seasickness, and was in a condition to enjoy his meals.

The steamer was full, but not crowded, and as usual contained in its passenger-list representatives of different social grades.

Tom was bright and active, and prepossessing in his appearance, and became known to all. He even penetrated at times into that part of the ship occupied by the steerage passengers.

His attention was particularly drawn to one poor fellow, a young Irishman of twenty-two, who was seasick through the entire voyage. Now, seasickness is scarcely tolerable if one has the best accommodations; in the steerage it must be perfect misery.

Tom carried from the table some fruit almost daily to poor Mike Lawton, whose stomach revolted from the coarse food to which he was entitled, and cheered up the poor fellow not a little.

"What would I do without your kindness?" said Mike one day.

"Don't speak of it," said Tom. "It isn't much to do. I know how bad it feels to be seasick."

"Sure, it's worse than the faver I had onc't in Ireland, when they didn't expect I'd live to see this day. If I was goin' to be seasick much longer, I'd wish I hadn't."

"Cheer up, Mike. You'll forget all about it when you get to shore."

"Then I wish I was there now. But there's one thing I won't forget, and that is how kind a rich young gentleman like you was to a poor fellow like me."

"You're mistaken about my being rich, Mike," said Tom.

"Sure you look like it."

"I was rich once, but I am not now. I am going out like you to seek my fortune."

"Then I hope you'll find it. Sure you deserve to."

"Thank you, Mike. I hope the same thing for you."

"If iver the likes of me can do you a favor, Mister Tom, I hope you won't be too proud to let me."

"I promise that, Mike. The time may come when I'll want a friend, and if I know where you are, I'll let you know."

"Thank you, Mr. Tom. I'm a poor fellow, but I can fight for you anyway."

"I can fight for myself, too," said Tom, smiling.
"I've had to, more than once."

There was another passenger, of quite a different character, with whom Tom became intimate, and to whom, also, he was able to do a service.

One morning he noticed an elderly man, evidently quite feeble, attempting with the help of a cane to

pace the deck—about the only exercise practicable on shipboard. But the vessel was so unsteady that the old man found the task too great for his strength, and he was finally obliged, unwillingly, to sit down.

“That’s a pity,” thought Tom. “I’ll offer to help him.”

He approached the old man and said:

“You find it hard work pacing the deck, don’t you, sir?”

“Yes,” answered the other. “I am not young and strong like you, and the motion of the vessel makes it too much for my scanty strength.”

“If you’ll take my arm, sir, I think I can pilot you safe.”

“But it will be a great deal of trouble for you, won’t it?”

“Oh, don’t think of that, sir; I shall be very glad to be of any service to you.”

“Thank you. I am tired of sitting, and will accept your offer; but when you are tired, tell me so.”

“All right, sir.”

Supported by Tom, the old man was able to resume his walk and keep it up with ease. Our hero was stout and strong, and adapted himself to the slow gait of his elder companion.

“Are you traveling alone?” asked the old man.

“Yes, sir.”

“Perhaps you meet friends in California?”

“No, sir; I don’t know anybody there.”

“Then how happens it that you are going out? You are not over seventeen, I judge.”

"I am only sixteen, sir. My principal object in going out is to seek my fortune."

"Are you poor?" asked the old man abruptly.

"Not exactly," said Tom. "That is, I have a few hundred dollars, and shall perhaps have something besides, but my fortune is to be made. I have been rich, but I lost nearly all I had."

"Does it trouble you?"

"Not at all," said Tom. "I am not afraid but I can make my way."

"You have, at any rate, something that is better than money," said the old man.

"What is that, sir?"

"Youth, health and strength. I have neither of these, but I have money. How gladly would I exchange with you!"

Tom felt that he would not care to make the exchange.

"I am going to California for my health," said Tom's companion. "My doctor tells me that there is some hope that it may benefit me. Had I stayed at home, he said he would not insure me twelve months more of life."

"Did you come alone, sir?"

"Yes. I am nearly alone in the world. I have neither wife nor child."

There was a sadness in his voice as he said this, and Tom felt pity for his desolate condition.

"I think I will sit down now," he said, after walking half an hour. "I feel much better for the exercise. It

is the first I have enjoyed since we left the great metropolis of the East."

"Let me know when you want to walk again, sir," said Tom. "I shall be glad to walk with you."

"You are very kind, my young friend. May I know to whom I am indebted?"

"My name is Thomas Temple. Everybody calls me Tom."

"Let me give you my card. It may happen that I can at some time be of service to you. If so, be sure to communicate with me."

"Thank you, sir."

Tom took the card. It contained the name

.....
: HENRY STODDARD. :
.....

Underneath, Mr. Stoddard wrote the name of a banker in San Francisco.

"I cannot tell where my pursuit of health may take me," said Mr. Stoddard, "but a letter directed to the care of my banker will be sure to reach me."

It was the second offer of service that Tom had received in the same day. He felt that he would not be wholly friendless in the strange land which he was about to visit.

CHAPTER XXII.

FIRST PROSPECTS.



FROM the deck of the steamer, as it entered the harbor of San Francisco, Tom looked with eager interest at the city which was to be the scene of his future activity. But a few years had elapsed since the discovery of gold in California, and San Francisco was small compared with what it has since become. But, built as it was upon a hill-side, overlooking the bay, it was more conspicuous than many larger towns would have been, and, as may readily be imagined, was a welcome sight to voyagers who had been over twenty days at sea.

Mike Lawton had got over his seasickness at length, and was among the passengers on deck.

“How do you feel, Mike?” asked Tom.

“Mighty wake,” answered Mike, “but it does my eyes good to see land once more. If I trust myself on the say ag’in, I’m a haythen.”

“Then you mean to stay in California all your life?”

“I don’t know that,” said Mike. “Maybe I’ll go back by land.”

“And get scalped by savage Indians, Mike? That’ll be worse than being seasick.”

“And what’s that, Mr. Temple?”

“They take a knife and slice off the top of your head, with all the hair on it.”

"Oh, murdther! do they now? Isn't it jokin' ye are?"

"Not at all, Mike. That's exactly what they do when they get the chance."

"Bad luck to the dirty haythen!" said Mike, horror-struck at the thought. "And what good does it do them?"

"They hang up the scalps in their wigwams—that's their houses—to show how many enemies they have killed. The one that has the most scalps is the greatest man."

"Faith, then," said Mike, "I think I'll be stayin' here all the days of my life. What would Bridget say if I should come home without any roof on my head?"

Tom laughed.

"She wouldn't have any chance to pull your hair. But what are you going to do, Mike, in this new country?"

"Make a livin', I hope, Mister Tom. I must get work soon, for I haven't got but ten dollars in my pocket."

"I've got only sixty, Mike."

"That's little for a gentleman like you, Mister Tom."

"I've got to go to work, too, Mike."

"Shure, a gentleman like you will find a place quick."

"I don't know, Tom. I hope so."

Here Mr. Stoddard came up.

"Well, my friend," he said, "we are near the end of our voyage."

“Yes, sir, and I am glad of it.”

“I think we all are. Landsmen rarely enjoy the sea. What are your plans, if I may ask?”

“I shall go to a hotel first, and then take a look round the city and see what are my prospects for getting something to do.”

“A wise resolution, no doubt. I shall also go to a hotel, summon a physician, and ask his advice as to whether I had better remain in San Francisco or go into the interior. We may meet again.”

“Yes, sir, I hope so.”

“Perhaps we may stay at the same hotel.”

Tom shook his head.

“I don’t think it likely, sir,” he said. “I have very little money, and I must find a cheap place, such as you wouldn’t be likely to go to.”

“I shall go to the best hotel, not from any feeling of pride, but because my health and age require comforts such as you can do without. But I should like your company, and if you are not above accepting a favor from one who, though a comparative stranger, takes a friendly interest in you, I shall be glad to consider you my guest for a week.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Tom gratefully. “I am not above accepting a kindness, but I have got to rough it, and the sooner I begin the better. If I stay at the best hotel even for a few days, it will make it all the harder for me to come down to humble accommodations afterward. I had better begin as I can hold out.”

“I dare say you are right, my young friend. There

is certainly good sense and good judgment in what you say. But at any rate, I hope you will call upon me and let me know how you are getting along, and what are your prospects."

"I will, sir, and thank you for the invitation. There is nobody in the city that I know, and it will be a pleasure and privilege to come."

The old gentleman was pleased with this remark of Tom's, since it showed appreciation of his friendly overtures. Nor did he like him any the less for the independent spirit that led him to decline becoming his guest.

"He is a fine young fellow," he said to himself, "and I can't help feeling strongly interested in his success. If I can do him a good turn, I will."

I pass over the time spent in landing. It was not till five o'clock in the afternoon that Tom stood on shore, with his carpet-bag in his hand. He had not brought a trunk, wisely thinking that it would be in his way. As he stood undecided where to go, a man roughly dressed approached him.

"Do you want to go to a hotel?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tom. "Can you recommend one?"

"I'll take your bag and conduct you to a good one," said the other, and he laid hold of Tom's carpet-bag.

"Stop a minute," said Tom; "what shall you charge for doing it?"

"Five dollars," said the other coolly.

"Five dollars!" gasped Tom. "*Five dollars* to carry a carpet-bag? How far is the hotel?"

"About half a mile."

"And you ask five dollars for that?" said Tom in amazement.

"Regular price," said the other.

"I'll do it for four," said another man, coming up.

"Will you?" said the first in a menacing tone. "If you interfere with my business, I'll blow your brains out."

"Don't quarrel, gentlemen," said Tom hastily, for his two would-be guides had the air of men who would draw pistols on the least provocation. "I'll carry my bag myself. I don't dispute your price, but I can't afford to pay it. I am poor, and I have my fortune to make."

"All right, stranger," said the first. "I thought you were rich. Just go straight ahead for about a quarter of a mile, and then turn to the right, and you'll find a cheap house. I don't charge anything for the advice."

"Thank you," said Tom. "There's a gentleman," pointing to Mr. Stoddard, "who may wish to engage you."

Tom trudged ahead in the direction indicated.

"If that's a specimen of California prices," he said to himself, "my sixty dollars won't last long. I wonder what I shall have to pay at the hotel."

His guide's directions were easy to follow. Tom halted in front of a two-story building of rather primitive appearance, which, however, had the look of a hotel.

"Is this a hotel?" he asked of a negro at the door.

"Yes," was the reply. "Have you come by the steamer, sar?"

"Yes," said Tom. "Where is the office?"

"Go in and you'll see."

Tom entered and walked up to a desk which he saw at one corner of the apartment. A man was seated astride on it, picking his teeth with a knife.

"I should like to have a room," said Tom.

"A whole one?" asked the other leisurely.

"I should prefer a room to myself," said Tom.

"What will it cost?"

"About fifteen dollars, I reckon."

"Fifteen dollars a week," said Tom, encouraged to find prices less than he anticipated.

The clerk laughed.

"I say, young chap, when did you arrive?" he asked.

"Just now."

"I thought so. You don't understand our prices. I meant fifteen dollars a day."

"Is that your lowest price?" asked Tom in dismay.

"You said you wanted a whole room?"

"How much will it be if I go in with somebody else?"

"I can put you in with two other gentlemen," said the clerk, "for eight dollars a day."

This was not so bad, but considering that our hero had but sixty dollars, it was still a formidable price.

"Is this the best hotel in San Francisco?" he asked.

"There's more expensive ones," said the clerk.

"I'll stay here," said Tom hastily, "for a day at least."

“Just as you like, stranger.”

He led the way to an upper room, containing three small beds, and little else. Tom laid down his bag and looked about him, but forbore comment on the bare appearance of the room.

“When can I have supper?” he asked.

“In an hour.”

“Well,” thought Tom, sitting down on the bed when the clerk had left him, “things begin to look serious. I’ve got money enough to pay a week’s board, and that’s all. I must get work within that time, or there’s a fine prospect of starvation.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

MIKE'S GOOD LUCK.



AFTER supper, which hardly corresponded with the price he was paying, Tom went out to look at the town. Five years had elapsed since the first discovery of gold, and society was yet in an unsettled condition. Houses of all descriptions, some very primitive, were scattered about. It was easy to see, even at that time, that some time a well-built city would take the place of this irregular settlement.

Everything indicated progress, everything spoke of enterprise and energy. Notwithstanding his scanty supply of money, and the certainty that it would soon be exhausted, Tom felt his spirits rise. If charges were great, it was probable that wages would also be large, and he felt sure that he could earn his share.

On his way home, in front of a small shanty, he recognized his steerage friend, Mike, sitting on a three-legged stool, smoking a clay pipe.

"How are you, Mike?" he said, pleased to find one he knew.

"Is it you, Mister Tom?" responded Mike, his face lighting up with equal pleasure. "Shure it does me good to see you again."

"And I am glad to see you, Mike. Is this where you are putting up?"

"Yes, Mister Tom."

"It doesn't look like a hotel."

"Shure it is, though, more by token it belongs to an ould frind of mine, Carny Rafferty, from my own town in County Cork. Wasn't it luck jist that I met him in the strate, and he took me home and gave me a job at once?"

"I should say it was luck, Mike. What do you think I am paying at my hotel?"

"How much, Mister Tom?"

"Eight dollars a day."

"Shure, Carny charges four dollars for jist a bit of a shake down on the floor and board."

"You said Carny had given you a job?"

"Yes. I'm the cook and make the beds and such like."

"What do you know about cooking, Mike?" asked Tom laughing.

"Divil a bit, except to bile pratees," answered Mike, with a grin, "but I'll soon learn."

"I don't think I'll come here to board till after you've learned, Mike."

"Sure it isn't any place for the likes of you, Mister Tom. It's for chaps like me, and poor miners."

"I don't know about that, Mike. If I don't get something to do in a week, I shall go up in a balloon."

"Go up in a balloon!" ejaculated Mike, opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

"I mean that I shall get to the bottom of my purse. Do you mind telling me how much wages you get?"

"Three dollars a day and board," said Mike.

"That's good. Couldn't you get me a place as cook?"

"It's jokin' you are."

"I am not sure about that. I'll take a place as cook or anything else rather than remain idle."

"If you get out of money, jist come to me, Mister Tom."

"Thank you, Mike," said Tom, grasping his hand heartily. "I'll do that rather than starve, I promise you, but I've got a week to find a place in, and perhaps I shall be as lucky as you."

"Thank you, Mister Tom. Mike Lawton's your friend, if you ain't ashamed to own him."

"Not I, Mike. I am glad of your friendship, and perhaps I'll prove it, by and by, by borrowing all your money."

"Thank you, Mister Tom," said honest Mike, really gratified by Tom's promise.

"And now, Mike, I must bid you good-night. I feel rather sleepy, and shall enjoy sleeping in a bed again. I'll come round and see you again in a day or two."

As Tom walked away he felt still more encouraged about his prospects. Since Mike had been fortunate, why might not he be also?

Arrived at his hotel, Tom asked for a candle, as he wished to go to his room.

"There's a light up there," said the clerk. "The other gentlemen have just gone up."

"I wonder what they are like?" thought Tom as he ascended the stairs.

The door of his room was ajar, and a faint light streamed out into the entry. Pushing it open, he saw two roughly dressed and bearded men sitting down on one of the beds with a pack of cards between them.

"Wall, youngster, what do you want?" asked one.

"I believe we are room-mates," said Tom. "This bed is mine."

"Sail in, then. You're welcome. What's your name?"

"Tom Temple."

"Well, Temple, my name's Jim Granger, and this here's my pard."

"Pard?"

"Yes, pardner. Where was you raised not to know that? He's Bill Rogers."

"I'm glad to make your acquaintance, gentlemen," said Tom politely—with more politeness, perhaps, than sincerity.

"Come, that's talkin' fair. Have a drink, Temple?"

"No, thank you."

"Will you take a hand? Me and pard are playin' poker."

"I don't know the game."

"Oh, you'll learn it easy."

"Thank you, but not to-night. I'm tired, and think I shall go to bed. I came in the steamer this morning."

"Me and pard are goin' back by the same. We've made our pile, and now we're going to spend it."

"Have you been to the mines?" asked Tom, with interest.

"Yes, we were there a year and a half."

"And you were fortunate?"

"Not at first. Three months ago we were high and dry, when we struck a vein, and now we're rich."

All this was very interesting to Tom. His imagination had been dazzled by the stories he had heard of wealth suddenly acquired at the mines. There was a romance, too, about a mining life that had a charm about it. He waited until the game was through and ventured to ask another question.

"Do you think I shall stand any chance at the mines, Mr. Granger?" he asked.

"Mr. Granger? Oh, you mean me! That's the fust time I've been called mister in a year. Well, stranger, about that question of yours, I don't know what to say. Maybe there's a chance, and maybe there isn't. You'll have to rough it."

"I am ready to do that."

"And live poorer than you ever did afore, and then maybe you'll fail."

"Perhaps I won't," said Tom quietly. "You didn't."

"I came mighty near it. Well, Temple, go ahead and try it, if you ain't afraid of hard work and poor fare, sleeping out o' nights, and roughin' it generally."

"I think I will after a while," said Tom.

"It's your deal, pard," said Rogers.

Granger again turned his attention to the game, and Tom soon fell asleep. He dreamed that he went out to the mines and found a nugget as big as his head. In the midst of his joy at his good luck he awoke to find it broad daylight, and his companions already risen.

"I hope the dream will turn out true," thought our hero hopefully, as he dressed himself leisurely.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TOM GETS A PLACE.



TOM SPENT five days in pursuit of employment, but without success. True, he made three dollars one day by carrying a message, but when this was offset against an expenditure of forty dollars, it did not look encouraging.

Our hero, though naturally sanguine, begun to feel anxious. Reluctant as he might be to do so, he feared that he should be obliged to ask Mr. Stoddard for assistance. On the second day he had called upon that gentleman at the California Hotel, and been most kindly received. Tom had every reason to regard him as a man of large property, and willing to help him.

On the morning of the sixth day he made a second call at the hotel.

"Is Mr. Stoddard at home," he inquired at the office.

"He's gone away," said the clerk.

"Gone away!" repeated Tom, in accents of dismay.

"Do you know where he has gone?"

"Somewhere into the interior, I believe."

"Didn't he leave any message for me?" asked Tom, feeling that his last reliance had failed him.

"What's your name?"

"Temple."

"He did leave a little note then. Here it is."

Tom seized the note with eagerness.

“My young friend,” it commenced, “the physician tells me that the climate of San Francisco at this season is not favorable to my complaints. He orders me into the interior, but the place is not fixed upon. In three months I shall probably return. Meantime, you can learn from my banker, whose address I inclose, where I am, as I shall apprise them when I have myself determined. Meanwhile I hope you may meet with success in all your plans, and beg you to regard me as your friend and well-wisher. HENRY STODDARD.”

This was very friendly certainly, but it might be two or three weeks before Tom could communicate with his new friend, and he was nearly at the end of his purse.

“I made a mistake to stay in San Francisco. I should at once have gone to the mines,” thought Tom. “Now I haven’t money enough to leave the city. I *must* find something to do.”

He came to a small wooden building, used as a clothing store. Besides ordinary clothing it contained outfits for miners, and as profits were enormous, doubtless the business was a profitable one. Tom might have passed without taking particular notice if he had not heard sounds of altercation and loud voices as he approached. Then a young man of twenty-one, or thereabout, ran hastily out, pursued by a stout man of middle age, whose inflamed countenance showed that he was angry. The young man, however, was the better runner, and the elder was compelled to give up the pursuit.

Tom stood still and regarded the scene with interest and curiosity. He was still standing in front of the shop when the pursuer returned.

“What is the matter, sir?” asked Tom.

“Matter!” repeated the other vehemently. “I’ll tell you what’s the matter. That young man is a thief.”

“Did he pick your pockets?”

“No, but he might as well. He was my clerk. I engaged him two months since, and only to-day I found out that he has been robbing me systematically. He has taken hundreds of dollars probably. If I could only get hold of him, I would give him a lesson he would never forget.”

Here was Tom’s chance, and he lost no time in pushing it.

“Then you have no clerk now?” he said.

“No, and I don’t know where to get one that I can trust.”

“Take me,” said Tom confidently.

“You!” repeated the merchant in surprise.

“Yes; I am looking for a place, and I will serve you faithfully.”

“How old are you?”

“Sixteen.”

“You are only a boy.”

“I know that, but why can’t a boy sell goods as well as a man. It doesn’t take size or strength, does it?”

“You’re right there,” said the trader, “but it takes knowledge of the goods. Do you know anything of the business?”

"No, but I'll soon learn."

"Then I shall have the trouble of breaking in a green hand."

"It'll be very little trouble," said Tom confidently. "All you've got to do is to tell me the price of the goods, and I'll remember."

"How do I know but you'd follow the example of the scamp that's just left me, and purloin my money? Have you any recommendations?"

"No," said Tom; "I forgot all about bringing any."

"Don't you know anybody in the town?"

"Yes; I know an Irishman—Mike Lawton—cook in an Irish hotel."

"I don't think he'll do."

"Then," said Tom smiling, "I shall have to write a recommendation for myself. There's nobody knows so much about my honesty and capacity as I do."

Tom's frankness had won upon the trader, and he was inclined to overlook the want of recommendations.

"Suppose I conclude to take you on trial," he said, "what wages do you expect?"

Tom felt that in his circumstances he could not afford to bargain. It was all-important that he should get the place, for his experience taught him that they were not to be had easily.

"Take me a week on trial," he said; "give me my board and as much more as you think I am worth."

"That's fair. When do you want to come?"

"I can come now—or rather in an hour. I shall want to go to the hotel where I am stopping and get my carpet-bag."

“Very well. I will engage you for a week on trial. When you return with your carpet-bag, my wife will give you a room.”

“Thank you, sir. I’ll be right back.”

Tom breathed a sigh of relief. He had secured a place just in time. In less than two days his money would be exhausted, and he would be compelled either to beg or starve. What wages he might get in the place so unexpectedly opened to him he did not know, or care very much. The main advantage was, that he was saved from the heavy expense of a hotel bill. As to the business, he did not think he should like it for a permanent employment, but it would enable him to live while he was looking about for something better. In the meantime he could keep his eyes open, for he had not forgotten that his chief object in this expedition was to discover the defaulting clerk, whose dishonesty had so largely affected his own means.

In less than an hour Tom was back in the store and receiving his first lessons in the prices of articles for sale.

CHAPTER XXV.

TOM IN A TIGHT PLACE.



OM'S NEW employer was Oliver Burton. He had come from New Jersey originally with the intention of going to the mines, but he was shrewd enough to see, on landing in San Francisco, that trading was a more certain means of getting rich than mining. He established himself in the city, therefore, bought out a man who was compelled by sickness to retire from active business, and was now rich. Though occasionally irritable, he was in the main just and easy to get along with, and Tom soon got into favor.

Our hero had never worked, but he was sharp and diligent, and he did not need to be told the same thing twice. So at the end of the first week his employer said:

“Well, Tom, you have been with me a week, and for a green hand you have done remarkably well.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Tom; “I have tried to do my duty faithfully.”

“You have. Moreover, I am convinced of your honesty.”

“You need have no fears on that score,” said Tom proudly.

“I have not, and experience teaches me that this is quite as important as a capacity for business. Why, my

last clerk was a capital salesman—knew how to please customers and influence trade—but contrived to swindle me out of several hundred dollars in three months.”

“That wasn’t very satisfactory,” said Tom.

“I should say not. But what I am coming at is this—I should like to have you remain with me. What wages will satisfy you?”

“You are a better judge than I am. What did you give your last clerk?”

“Twenty-five dollars a week and board. You are a green hand, and several years younger, but in consideration of your honesty, in which I feel full confidence, I will give you twenty.”

“That will satisfy me, sir,” said Tom promptly.

“Then here are your first two week’s wages.”

Tom took the money—it was in gold—with pride and pleasure. It was no novelty to him to have considerable money, but excepting the three dollars which he had received for carrying a bundle, this was the first money he had actually earned, and he felt pleased accordingly.

“Twenty dollars and my board for a week’s work!” he said to himself. “Now I really begin to feel that I am of some use in the world. It’s a good deal better than leading an idle life.”

It may be remarked also, that Tom had lost with his property the old bullying spirit which gave him the title by which he was known at the beginning of this story. He still retained, however, the spirit and courage which in his case had accompanied it; and this was fortunate,

for he was in a country where at that time the laws had not yet obtained that ascendancy which they possess in older settlements. The time was not far off when his courage was to be tested.

About three weeks after his entrance into the store, Mr. Burton left the city for a visit of several days into the interior. By this time Tom knew enough of the business to be intrusted with the sole charge.

"I shouldn't have dared to leave my former clerk," said Mr. Burton, "but I am sure I can trust you."

"You can," said Tom promptly. "I may not be able to fill your place, but I'll do the best I can."

"I am convinced of it. You will sleep in the store; for though burglaries are not frequent, there might be an attempt to open the store."

"Yes, sir."

"You won't be afraid to remain here alone?"

"Afraid!" exclaimed Tom. "I hope not. I should be ashamed of myself if I were."

"I shall leave my revolver, and I expect you to use it if necessary. Do you understand its use?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I have no further directions to give. I cannot tell exactly how many days I shall be absent."

"Don't hurry home, sir. All will go well."

"It's odd how much confidence I have in that boy," said Mr. Burton to himself. "He says he is only sixteen, but he's as cool and self-reliant as a man of twenty-five. He has been well educated, too, I judge from his manners and conversation. I feel fortunate in securing him."

On the fourth night after Mr. Burton's departure, Tom went to bed at his usual hour. His bed was made up on the floor, about the center. He was unusually fatigued, and this no doubt accounted for his sleeping sounder than common. Something roused him at last. At first he thought, in his bewilderment, that it was Mr. Burton who had shaken him, but he was quickly undeceived.

Lifting his head, he saw a sinister face, rough and unshaven, bending over him.

"What!" he commenced, but the other interrupted him in a stern whisper.

"Speak low, boy! Make no alarm, or by the powers above I'll kill you instantly. Do you understand?"

Tom was now thoroughly awake. He comprehended that this man was one against whom it was his duty to defend the store and its contents. On account of the soundness of his sleep he had not heard him effect his entrance.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"You can guess why I am here. I want all the money you have in this store."

"You had better leave here at once," said Tom, having recourse to stratagem. "Suppose my employer should have heard you and come in."

"Suppose he don't," said the burglar, with a sneer. "I know as well as you that he is in the country. You can't play any of your games on me, boy."

"He has been in the country."

"And he is there now. Boy, I can't waste time. Do

you see this?" and he drew a formidable knife from its sheath.

"Yes, I see it," said our hero.

"You will feel it also," said the burglar, "if you don't show me where you keep your gold, and be quick about it."

"Tom was at his wits' end. There were eight hundred dollars in gold in the store, and moreover it was all kept together. If he could have saved the rest by delivering to the burglar a hundred dollars, he would not have scrupled to do this, feeling that in so doing he would do the best thing possible, and obtain Mr. Burton's approval. But this was impossible. It must be the whole or none, and it seemed probable that the whole would be taken. He was only a boy—strong of his age, it is true, but no match for the burly ruffian who, with drawn knife, was looking down upon him.

Again, suppose he surrendered the money, how could he convince Mr. Burton that he did it upon compulsion? Might it not be supposed that the burglar was a confederate of his own, whom he had voluntarily admitted into the store? Might it not even be suspected that there had been no burglary at all, but that he himself had appropriated the money, and trumped up a story to conceal his guilt.

These thoughts passed through his mind in a much shorter time than I have taken to record them. But slight as the delay was, it was too great for the impatience of the ruffian.

"If you don't get up before I count three," he said, "you shall have a taste of this knife."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BURGLAR BAFFLED.



SUALLY Tom slept with the revolver under his pillow. This night he had neglected to do so. Even had it been there, however, it would have been as much as his life was worth to reach for it, as the motion would have been at once understood by the ruffian, who stood over him with a knife in his hand.

"I'll get up," said Tom, in answer to the threat recorded in the last chapter.

"You'd better!" growled the burglar.

"What shall I do?" thought Tom, racking his brain for some way of escape.

An idea flashed upon him. He turned to go behind the counter.

"Where are you going?" demanded the burglar suspiciously.

"For the money. That's what you want, isn't it?" asked Tom.

"Be quick about it. Where do you keep it?"

"Mr. Burton will think I took it," said our hero, who had an object in what he said. "Won't you be satisfied with taking some clothes?"

"Don't be foolish, boy! What can I do with clothes? It is gold I want. Come, open the drawer. Where is it you keep it?"

"Will you leave a note for Mr. Burton, saying I didn't take it?" asked Tom, who wished the ruffian to consider him simple.

"What a fool!" thought the burglar. "I'll pretend to humor him. Yes," he said, "I'll leave a note which you can give him."

"Will you write it now?"

"Of course not. I will as soon as I have the gold in my possession."

"I suppose that will do. Step back, then."

"What are you going to do?" asked the burglar in surprise, seeing Tom bend over.

"Lift the trap-door."

"What for?"

"You want me to get the gold, don't you?"

"Well?"

"I must go down cellar for it."

"Is it kept down there?"

"Mr. Burton thought it would be safest there."

"Did he?" chuckled the robber. "Then he'll find his mistake."

Tom raised the trap-door and disclosed a staircase leading down into a subterranean vault.

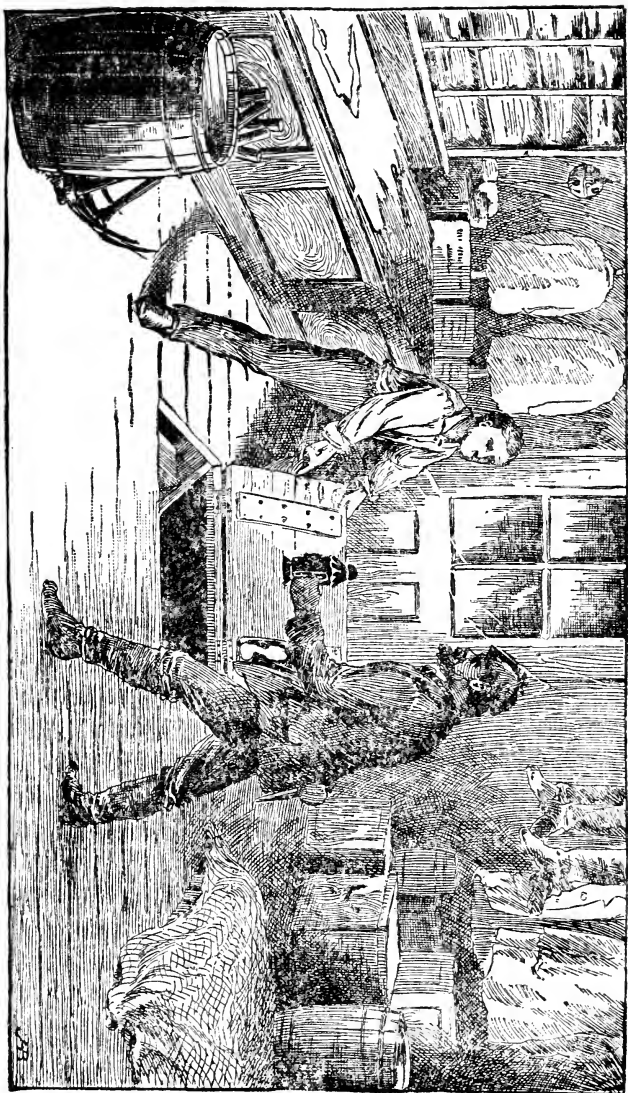
"I can't see," he said "Will you lend me your lantern?" referring to the dark-lantern which the burglar carried.

"Oh, that will be all right. I'll go down with you."

"I wish you would," said Tom. "I don't like to go done here alone."

"A coward!" thought the ruffian. "All the better

"TOM RAISED THE TRAP-DOOR TO ALLOW THE BURGLAR TO STEP INTO THE CELLAR."



for me. I thought from his looks that he was a bold, spirited boy, but appearances are deceitful. A pretty guardian he is for property."

This was precisely the opinion which Tom desired his companion to have of him, as it was necessary for the success of his plan that his suspicion should be disarmed, and he be taken off his guard.

The cellar into which they descended was used to store goods of various descriptions, and presented to the glance a confused pile of bales and boxes, arranged without much regard to order.

"This is a queer place to keep money," said the burglar, looking round.

"It's a first-rate place," said Tom complacently, "for nobody would ever think of looking for it here."

"I don't know but you're right. Well, where is it?"

"In that little chest," said Tom, pointing to one under a bale.

"So it's there, is it?" said the burglar triumphantly. "How much is there?"

"There's a good deal," said Tom; "but don't take all, will you? Mr. Burton will be so mad."

"Oh, no, I'll leave some," said the burglar mockingly. "What a simpleton he is," he thought. "Come, open it. Is it locked?"

"There, what a fool I was!" said Tom, in a tone so natural that it deceived his companion. "I left the key up-stairs. But I won't keep you a minute. I'll go up and get it."

But for the opinion he had formed of our hero's sim-

plicity, the burglar would hardly have suffered Tom to leave him. As it was his contempt made him feel secure.

"Well, be quick then," he said. "I can't wait here all night."

Tom did not answer.

He sprung up the stairs, and the first intimation the astonished ruffian had of his design was conveyed in the slamming to of the trap-door.

"Confusion!" he muttered. "The young rogue has outwitted me."

He sprung forward, but in such haste that he tripped over a bale and measured his length on the floor, dropping his lantern at the same time. His temper by no means improved by this accident, he picked himself up, and springing up the narrow staircase, tried to raise the trap-door.

But Tom had drawn two bolts which fastened it above, and moreover, was dragging a heavy box to place upon it, so that the entrapped person found himself utterly unable to lift it.

"Open the door!" he shouted from below in mingled rage and fright.

"I'd rather not!" Tom shouted back in reply.

"If you don't I'll make it the worst for you, you young villain."

"You'll have to get at me first," said Tom in a tone of aggravation.

The burglar realized that so far from being simple he had to deal with a boy who was brave and quick-witted.

"Confusion!" he muttered to himself. "If I am caught here it will ruin me."

Again he shouted:

"I'll shoot you through the floor."

"Better not," retorted Tom. "It will rouse the neighbors. Besides, I've got a revolver too."

"I don't believe it."

"That don't alter the fact."

"Why didn't you show it?"

"I couldn't get at it while you stood over me with a knife."

"He's got me at an advantage," thought the villain. "I must change my tone."

"Let me up," he pleaded, "and I'll go off without taking your gold."

"I don't mean that you shall," said Tom coolly. "You can't get at it."

"Why not?"

"It isn't down there at all."

"Then you deceived me," exclaimed the baffled villain.

"Of course I did, and would do it again."

"Are you going to let me out?" demanded the burglar, knocking furiously at the trap-door.

"Not till morning."

There was no doubt about it. The burglar had been completely outwitted and trapped by a boy. That was the most humiliating part of it. If he could have got at our hero then, there is little doubt that he would have put him to death without a moment's hesitation.

But luckily for Tom there was a good plank flooring between, and a trap-door which was secured by two strong bolts. But Tom did not feel quite secure. There was an egress from the cellar at one side. If the ruffian should discover this, his peril would be *extreme*.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ARRESTED.



THE BURGLAR, fairly trapped, gnashed his teeth with rage. To have been caught thus by a boy whom he had despised, increased his rage and humiliation. Besides he was in great peril. Burglary, and indeed all offences against property, were severely punished in this new State. It was a matter of necessity, considering the elements that had been brought together, and the freedom and lack of restraint that characterized the people. So the ruffian was fairly frightened. But he resolved to try the effect of one more appeal.

“Listen, boy,” he called out. “Let me out, and I will not only promise to do no harm and take no money, but I will give you two hundred dollars in gold, which I have in my pocket at this moment.”

But Tom was not to be caught by a promise only made to be broken.

“That’s too thin,” he answered back. “I sha’n’t let you out. You are best off where you are.”

“I’d like to kill him!” thought the burglar, grinding his teeth.

“Beware what you say, boy,” he shouted. “You have me at advantage now, but the time will come when I shall be free. When that time comes I will kill you unless you release me at once.”

“I must take the risk,” said Tom.

“Then you won’t let me out?”

“I won’t.”

There was no answer, for the burglar, who had previously decided that he could not lift the trap-door, determined to see if there was no other mode of egress.

Here was Tom’s danger.

There was a door at one side, as already explained. This had hitherto escaped the burglar’s attention, for the dark-lantern lighted up only a small part of the cellar, and left the rest in gloom. Supposing the door was found, and being bolted within, it could easily be opened and egress obtained, Tom would be in a perilous position. The burglar would again enter as he had done previously, and inflamed by anger, would not only take the gold, but perhaps kill our hero.

This thought was enough to startle the bravest. Tom felt that he must have assistance, and he took the most effectual way of calling it.

He threw open the outer door, stepped into the street, and fired the revolver, not once only, but twice. In the silent street, wrapped in darkness, these two shots were heard with startling emphasis. Neighbors rushed to their windows and called out:

“What has happened? What’s the matter?”

“Help!” exclaimed Tom. “Come here at once. There’s a burglar in the cellar. Come quick, and help me secure him.”

Half a dozen men hurried on their clothes, seized arms and hurried down into the street.

Meanwhile the noise of the revolver had been heard by the trapped burglar also.

"Confusion!" he exclaimed, with an oath, "the boy is calling assistance. He must be afraid I will get out. There must be a door somewhere. I must find it at once, or all is over with me."

He had been turning his attention to the wrong side of the cellar, and this delayed him a little. But finally, with a cry of triumph, he espied the door. He saw also that it was bolted inside, and inferred that there would be no difficulty in opening it. But for some reason it stuck, and this occasioned further delay. Otherwise he might have got out in time to attack Tom before the arrival of help. But the little delay was in our hero's favor. When the burglar got out he heard voices of men speaking with his young enemy.

"Where's the burglar?" asked Archibald Campbell, a gigantic Scot, who was the next-door neighbor.

"In the cellar," said Tom in a low voice.

"Can he get out?"

"Yes," said Tom in a whisper, so as to afford no information in case the discovery had not yet been made. "There's a side door, and if he's found it he's free now perhaps."

"Where is the door?"

"On that side."

"Come, then," said the brave Scot, "**we'll nab him.** What weapons has he got?"

"A knife, and perhaps a revolver."

By this time another man had come up.

"We must have him if it's a possible thing," said Campbell. "That sort of vermin are best shut up where they can't get into mischief."

The burglar, now outside, heard these last words. He realized that Tom was too strong now to attack, and that his only safety lay in flight. If he could get away, there would be a chance for retaliation later. He could not escape into the street. That was barred by his pursuers. In the rear there was a fence to be surmounted. That was the only way of escape.

He was mounting the fence when his enemies came round the corner of the house and espied him.

"There he is," said Tom.

Archibald Campbell raised his revolver and covered the ruffian.

"Halt, man!" he cried. "Do you surrender?"

"No, hang you!" answered the burglar, and he, also, was about to draw a corresponding weapon, when the Scotchman, feeling that their lives were in peril, and there was no time for parley, fired, striking the man in the wrist. The weapon fell to the ground, and he uttered an exclamation of pain. Before he could recover the weapon they had rushed upon him.

"Look out for his knife!" shouted Tom.

This made them cautious, and they stood off at a distance of six feet.

"Come down from that fence," said Campbell in a commanding tone, "and give yourself up as our prisoner. If you refuse, or if you stoop to raise that pistol, I will shoot you through the head."

There was a stern resoluteness in his tone which convinced the ruffian that he was in earnest.

"What do you want with me?" he asked doggedly.

"What should we want with such as you? To give you up to the authorities. It is not safe for such men to be at large."

"Let me go," pleaded the burglar abruptly. "I have taken nothing."

"You intended to."

"But I have not, and I will not—from you. I will agree to leave the city and never return."

"You cannot be trusted," said the Scotchman promptly. "We can make no conditions with you."

"You may repent this," the ruffian growled.

"I should repent letting you go, but I sha'n't leave any chance of that. Are you coming down?"

Slowly and reluctantly the burglar backed down from the fence, and with a longing look at his pistol, which he knew it would be death to pick up, he allowed himself to be taken prisoner.

"Drop your knife," said his chief captor.

He obeyed with a malignant scowl at Tom.

"I'd like to sheathe it in that boy," he muttered, "and I will some time."

"Don't let him frighten you, my lad," said the Scotchman. "You've done your duty bravely."

"He does not frighten me," said Tom calmly.

A crowd had collected by this time, who escorted the burglar to the lock-up.

"Now," thought Tom as he re-entered the shop, "I'll try to get a little more sleep."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MAN TOM WANTED TO SEE.



IN SPITE of the exciting events of the night Tom fell asleep and slept soundly till morning. He had done his duty as a matter of course and it did not occur to him that he had done anything heroic till he read a paragraph in the paper the next day giving an account of the affair, in which he was spoken of in the most complimentary terms. The paragraph was headed "A Young Hero."

It served as an excellent advertisement. The following day he had three times the number of visitors and twice as large sales as on any preceding one. In fact he was kept so hard at work that he was delighted about the middle of the afternoon to see his employer walk into the shop.

"I am glad to see you back, Mr. Burton," said Tom.

"And I am glad to be back," said his employer. "But what is all this I hear, Tom, about an attempted burglary?"

"Did you see the paragraph in the morning's paper, sir?"

"Yes. I see you are reported to have acted like a young hero."

Tom smiled.

"I didn't know that I had done anything heroic till I read it in the paper," he said.

"I like your modesty, Tom," said Mr. Burton approvingly. "If the account is correct, however, I must say that you showed a good deal of pluck. That was a capital stratagem by which you trapped him."

"He didn't think so," said Tom, laughing. "You have no idea how mad he was. I pretended to be a simpleton, and that put him off his guard."

"By Jove, I don't believe I should have managed the matter so well myself. Weren't you afraid?"

"I wasn't altogether comfortable in my mind," said Tom, "for I wasn't sure that my plan would work, but I can't say I was frightened."

"If you had been you wouldn't have been able to act with so much coolness. How much money was there in the drawer?"

"Eight hundred dollars."

"Is it possible? You must have been doing a good trade."

"I think I have," said Tom complacently.

"You have done as well as if I had been here. I will take care that you are rewarded for your fidelity."

"It is enough if you are pleased," said Tom.

"No, it isn't. Such fidelity and bravery as yours deserve to be encouraged, for they are rare enough."

Mr. Burton went to the drawer and counted the money. It exceeded eight hundred dollars, for Tom had been doing a good trade that day. In fact, it was close upon a thousand.

He took out a hundred dollars in gold and handed it to Tom.

"Here, Tom," said he. "I give you a hundred dollars. It will show you that I am not ungrateful."

"A hundred dollars!" said Tom, in astonishment. "You give it to me?"

"Yes, I don't know but I ought to give you more."

"No, no," said Tom hastily. "You are very generous. But I don't think I ought to take it."

"Then be guided by me and accept it. I give it to you freely. Without you I should have lost eight times the amount. You not only have done your duty faithfully, but you risked your life in doing it."

"I suppose I did," said Tom, "but I didn't think of that at the time."

"Take the money, then, and I hope it may be of service to you."

"Thank you, sir. The money will be of service to me, and since you insist upon it, I will accept it."

"Understand, Tom, that in giving you this money I don't feel that I have cancelled the obligation. Should another opportunity occur, I shall do what I can to promote your interests."

"Thank you, sir," said Tom.

The consciousness of having done one's duty faithfully, and having that service appreciated, is certainly pleasant, and Tom went about his duties from this time with even greater alacrity than before, feeling that he had made a friend of his employer.

It was certainly a great change from the character which he had previously sustained as a bully, and an arrogant, imperious boy. The truth was that he had been injured by his prosperity.

When, through circumstances over which he had no control, he had lost his fortune, and been reduced to comparative poverty, he found himself for the first time filling a useful place in the world.

His new position required courtesy and a disposition to oblige, and he was wise enough to see it. So he had improved in a marked manner under the discipline of adversity, and no longer deserved the appellation once given him of "Bully of the Village."

So far as his situation went, Tom had nothing to complain of. Rather he had reason to congratulate himself on his success. Coming to California, wholly without friends or acquaintances, and with very slender means, he had certainly been fortunate, and had deserved his good fortune. But he did not forget that he came to San Francisco with a special mission, and he had not as yet taken a single step toward fulfilling this mission.

He had promised Mr. Armstrong to look up the clerk who had absconded with so large a sum of money, and precipitated his downfall. All that he had done to redeem this promise was to watch the persons whom he met, and notice their personal peculiarities, in the hope some day of identifying Samuel Lincoln.

But as yet no one had been seen at all corresponding to the merchant's description.

"What more can I do? What more ought I to do?" thought Tom. "If I only knew, I would do it. But it may be that this is really a wild-goose chase. There seems as little chance of finding this man as of finding a needle in a haystack."

Tom was right. He had absolutely no clew by which to guide himself. He would indeed know this man if he came across him, but what was the chance of such a meeting? Surely, very little.

Tom begun to think he had been altogether too sanguine in the matter. He had set about the quest with all a boy's sanguine ardor, forgetting, or rather leaving out of the account, the difficulties in the way. But unable to tell what to do, he continued to stay on in Mr. Burton's employment, and in so doing he was unconsciously doing the very best thing he could.

One day, about three months after he had entered upon his place, two customers entered the shop, and expressed a desire to look at some clothing.

The spokesman was a tall, thin man, of perhaps forty. From him Tom's glance wandered to his companion, and his heart suddenly gave a great bound.

He was rather short, stout, dark-complexioned, with a cast in his left eye, and on the back of his left hand there was a scar.

Every point of his appearance tallied with the description of the absconding clerk.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ABSCONDING CLERK.



HE TWO customers did not notice Tom's earnest look, nor his start of surprise, but asked to look at a miner's outfit. Tom waited upon them, and listened eagerly, hoping to hear something that might confirm his suspicions.

"Gates," said the shorter of the two whom Tom suspected, "here's something that will suit you."

"I don't know but you are right, Morton," was the response.

"So his name is Morton," thought Tom, with momentary disappointment. "But of course he would change his name," he immediately reflected. "He must be Samuel Lincoln. The description tallies in every particular."

"Are you going to the mines?" he asked, feeling that the inquiry would create no suspicion.

"Yes," said Gates. "We are going to make our fortunes."

"Then you'd better take me along," said Tom. "That's exactly what I am after."

Gates laughed.

"Do you want to go as private secretary?" he asked jestingly. "I don't think my friend will want one, and I am sure I don't."

"I can think of another position I would like," said Tom.

"What is that?"

"Treasurer."

"Good!" said Gates, laughing. "I see you are sharp. But I'll tell you what, young man, we are too sharp to employ you in that capacity. You might take a notion to leave us without warning."

"I see you don't know me," said Tom. "I am poor but honest."

"I've heard of that before," said Gates. "There's a good deal of humbug about that."

"Seriously, gentlemen," said Tom, "I am anxious to go out to the gold-fields, and am able to pay my expenses there, but I haven't any friends that are going. Would you mind my going along with you?"

"Oh, come and welcome, if you'll pay your own expenses," said Gates. "What do you say, Morton?"

"I don't mind," said Morton. "He won't trouble us."

"Thank you," said Tom. "When are you going to start?"

"Day after to-morrow."

"I will be ready. Where shall I join you?"

"We are stopping at the Hotel of California."

"I will come round there to-morrow night."

"All right. You will find us."

When this conversation was taking place Mr. Burton was out. After the strangers had retired he entered.

"Mr. Burton," said Tom, "I am going to surprise you."

"Not unpleasantly, I hope."

"I leave that to you to decide. I am going to leave your employment."

"Going to leave me! Have you received a better offer? If you have, I will advance your wages to the same point. I should be very sorry to lose you."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Mr. Burton, but I have received no better offer, nor am I dissatisfied with my wages."

"Then why do you wish to leave me?" demanded his employer in surprise.

"I am going to the mines."

"Better think twice of that, Tom. Here you have a certainty and a comfortable living. There you will encounter hardship and privation, while the prospect of profitable returns for your labor is very uncertain."

"I know all that, sir, but I have a special object."

"What is it?"

"I will tell you, sir, in confidence. I came to California in search of a clerk who ran away from New York with a large sum of money and securities."

"You—a boy of your age?" exclaimed Mr. Burton in astonishment.

"Yes, sir."

"Who would employ so young a detective?"

"I came at my own expense and on my own account. You will understand better when I tell you that this clerk caused the failure of a merchant who owed me ten thousand dollars. If the securities can be recovered he will be able to pay me dollar for dollar."

"This is a strange story, Tom."

"It is perfectly true, sir."

"What made you think the clerk was in California?"

"I was not certain, but there were rumors that he had come here."

"Rumors are not very safe to rely upon."

"I know that, sir, but it seemed very probable, and I was willing to take the risk."

"I infer that you think you may find this clerk at the mines."

"Yes, sir. I know he is going out there."

"How do you know it?" asked Burton in fresh surprise.

"Because he was in this store to-night, and said so in my presence."

"The absconding clerk was here to-night?"

"Yes, sir. I recognized him at once from the description, though he had changed his name, and I had never met him. I learned that he was going to the mines with a companion, and I asked leave to join the party."

"Of course he has no idea who you are?" said Mr. Burton.

"No, he never saw me, and had no ground of suspicion. But he might recognize my name, and so I am going to change it. I shall call myself Tom Lincoln."

"Why Lincoln?"

"That is his real name."

"Won't it lead him to suspect you?"

"I think not. There are a good many Lincolns at

the East. But I presume he will be a little startled when he first hears the name, and in fact that is the reason why I adopt it. I want to be perfectly sure that he is the man I am after."

"Tom, you appear to me to be shrewd enough to be a detective. I wish you success with all my heart. I am sorry to have you leave me, but of course I feel that I ought not to wish to detain you. When do you want to go?"

"I shall have to make some preparations," said Tom. "I should like to leave you at twelve to-morrow. I hope you won't be troubled to fill my place."

"There's a young fellow—a distant relation of my wife—who is anxious to obtain a position. I would rather have you, but if you insist upon leaving me, I will at any rate give him a trial. I will send for him to-morrow morning."

"That's all right then," said Tom with satisfaction. "I will ask you to give me a recommendation under the name of Lincoln, as it may come handy some day."

"I will do that with pleasure, Tom. How are you provided with money?"

"I have nearly two hundred dollars, thanks to the hundred you gave me."

"That sum you richly deserved. I may as well say now that if you should fail in your project and return to San Francisco, you have only to come to me and I will find something for you to do."

"Thank you," said Tom warmly. "I will remember that and your constant kindness to me."

“He’s a fine fellow,” thought Burton, “and as sharp as a steel-trap. I’m very sorry to lose him.”

But Tom felt less regret. He had a boyish love of adventure, and he was about to play for a high stake. The mission which he had undertaken was one which required all his shrewdness to carry out successfully. Tom realized this, but he was resolved to do his best.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE EFFECT OF A NAME.



SO YOU haven't changed your mind, young man," said Gates, as Tom presented himself at the hotel the following evening.

"No," said Tom, "I'm in earnest. When do you start?"

"To-morrow at ten."

"I will be on hand."

"By the way, what is your name? How shall we call you?"

The time had come for Tom to test the correctness of his suspicions. Fixing his eyes, but not with obtrusive attention, on the man he suspected, he answered carelessly:

"You may call me Tom Lincoln."

Morton started and turned swiftly toward our hero.

"What name did you say?"

"Tom Lincoln."

"I once knew a man of that name," said Morton hesitatingly. "From what State do you come?"

"Our family originated in Massachusetts," answered Tom, not appearing to notice anything in the other's manner. "I believe the name is a common one."

"Very likely," said Morton, recovering himself, convinced that it was only an accidental coincidence. He

was naturally suspicious, not knowing what steps might have been taken to secure him. It seemed improbable, however, that a mere boy like Tom should know anything of his crime or have any connection with the efforts to capture him. It may be added that his secret was known to no one in California except our hero. Gates was an acquaintance he had picked up and made a companion from his need of society, but this chosen comrade knew nothing of him save what he had chosen to tell, and sincerely believed that Morton was his real name.

They did not occupy the same room at the hotel. Gates had proposed it, but Morton had not encouraged the idea. He said that he was a light sleeper and always accustomed to room alone, and Gates acquiesced.

When Morton was alone in his chamber, after disrobing himself, he unclasped from around his waist a belt which had been made expressly for his use. Opening it, he drew forth a quantity of papers and carefully examined them. It is not my intention to mystify the reader. These were the papers which had been taken from his employer, and for the lack of which that employer had been compelled to fail. They represented an aggregate value of eighty thousand dollars.

Morton looked them over carefully, as I have said.

"Yes, they are all here," he said thoughtfully. "I wish I could turn them into cash; at present they do me no good. I wish I could with safety dispose of them, but no doubt an accurate list has been furnished to the detectives. Meanwhile they are a great care to

me. I am compelled to carry them round with me all the time. I don't dare to leave them on deposit at any bank lest they should be identified as stolen property."

Here there was a knock at the door. Morton turned pale, and huddled the papers into the bed near by. Then with a perturbed look he opened the door to Gates.

"What's the matter, Morton?" he said. "You look startled. Did you think I was a burglar?"

Morton responded with a forced laugh.

"I was plunged in thought," he said, "and your knock startled me. Will you come in?"

"A minute, if you don't mind. Have you any matches? I have none in my room. I rang the bell, but nobody came."

"Yes, there are some. Help yourself."

Gates, not suspecting how unwelcome his visit was, sat down and lighted a cigar.

"Is smoking offensive to you?" he asked.

"Well, yes, in a bedroom."

"Out it goes then. I suppose you were thinking of the fortunes we are going to make."

"Perhaps so," said Morton, who didn't care to divulge his real thoughts.

"By the way," said Gates, "I hope your bed is better than mine. Mine is as hard as a brick."

As he spoke he reached out his hand and touched the quilt, directly over the spot where the papers were concealed.

"Don't do that," said Morton nervously.

"Don't do what," asked Gates staring.

"I may be silly," stammered Morton, "but I can't bear to have any one touch my bed."

Gates laughed.

"Why, man, you're as nervous as a woman," he said.

"I suppose I am," said Morton, smiling in a forced manner.

"Luckily for me I was born without nerves," said Gates. "It's a great blessing. Nothing disturbs me except—well, except the want of money."

"It is uncomfortable," said Morton.

"You are rich, though. You don't understand what it is."

"No, I am not, Gates. I've got a thousand dollars, and little else—except some stocks that are well-nigh worthless."

"Well, I haven't got any stocks—worthless or otherwise—to worry me. I may have, by and by, if we are lucky at the gold-fields."

"Just so; that is what I am hoping. A thousand dollars won't go far here."

"I should think not. But I suppose you want to go to bed. So good-night."

"I am glad he's gone," said Morton to himself, when his companion left the room. "Have I done right to encourage his intimacy? Is there no fear that through him my secret may be divulged? Then, there is that boy. It's strange, by the way, that his name is Lincoln—the same as mine. Perhaps he is a distant relation. However, he is only a boy. There can't be any harm in him."

It was not altogether true that Morton was reduced to a thousand dollars in gold. He had about four times that sum remaining of the cash he had purloined from his former employer. But in California, as I have already said, this was an era of high prices, and though this sum seemed considerable, it would soon melt away if Morton did not find some way of earning more. He might have gone into business in San Francisco with what money he had, but there was always danger of being recognized in a city, the population of which was reinforced every week or two by new emigrants from the States. Under the circumstances the most feasible plan of increasing his fortunes seemed to be to go to the mines. Could he only have negotiated the valuable securities which he had brought away with him, he would have made his way to Europe, settled down on the Continent, and lived comfortably, provided with ample means. But, as we know, the securities thus far had only occasioned him anxiety and apprehension. He could not see his way clear to any benefit to be derived from them, unless to negotiate for their return in consideration of a liberal reward. He was not prepared, as yet, to hazard the danger of such a course.

The night passed, and the next morning rose bright and clear. The first part of the journey was to be performed in a stage-coach. The last must be made with such aids as they could find.

At ten they started. Tom and Gates were in high spirits. Morton was more sober. He had cares and anxieties from which they were exempt.

Each of the three was provided with a revolver, for the country was unsettled, and they were liable to meet with highwaymen. Tom had no weapon of his own, but Gates, who had two, lent him one of his. Tom secretly hoped that he might have a chance to use it. He was of an age when adventure, even when accompanied by peril, has a certain charm.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HERR SCHMIDT.



IT WAS twilight of the second day. They had exchanged the stage-coach for a rude wagon, which jolted uncomfortably over the rough roads. They had traveled for the greater part of two days, yet were less than eighty miles from San Francisco. It was a wearisome mode of traveling, and they were all tired. The party consisted of but four. Gates, Morton, Tom, and a stout Dutchman, who bewailed his miseries most of all.

"I don't call this traveling for pleasure," said Gates, as he was jolted off his seat.

"No! I," said Morton. "I wish I had never left San Francisco."

"Oh, well," said Tom, who, being younger, was more hopeful than the rest, "it won't last forever."

"What is dat you say?" broke in the German. "Forever! Gott in Himmel! I hope not. I think I shall never see mein frau and die kinder once more at all."

"Oh, yes, you will, mein herr," said Tom. "You will go back with a big lump of gold, and live happy ever after."

"If I do not get killed first," said the German dubiously. "Gott in Himmel, where am I going?"

As he spoke, in consequence of a sudden jolt the

unhappy German tumbled over backwards upon the floor of the wagon, there being no back to the seat, and lay on his back incapable of sitting up.

"Ich bin tolt!" he groaned, "ich denke dat my bones are broke in two."

Oh, no, mein herr," said Tom. "They are too well covered for that. Don't you be alarmed, I'll help you up," and he sprung to the side of his prostrate fellow-traveler, and tried to help him to his feet. But Herr Johann Schmidt weighed two hundred and sixty pounds, and though Tom succeeded in raising his head about six inches from the floor of the wagon, he could do no more. In fact, as bad luck would have it, it fell back with a whack, and caused the poor Dutchman to redouble his groans.

"You have killed me once more," he said dolefully.

"Excuse me, mein herr," said Tom. "I didn't know you were so heavy. Mr. Gates, won't you help me?"

But before Gates could come to his help there was another fearful jolt, causing the prostrate body to give an upward bound and fall back with several additional bruises.

"Stop the horse!" roared the incumbent Teuton. "Stop him all at once, or I shall be murdered."

The horse was stopped, and by the united help of the other three, Herr Johann Schmidt was replaced on his seat.

"I wish I had not come out here," he bewailed to himself. "Why could I not stay zu home in my

lager bier saloon, where I was make much money. I shall not never go back once more, and what will mein frau do?"

"Oh, don't mind about her," said Gates mischievously. "She'll marry another man, and he'll take care of the children."

"Was!" roared the Teuton, his small eyes lighted up with anger. "Mein frau marry another man! Den I will not die at all!"

"That's where your head's level," said Tom, who had picked up the phrase in San Francisco. "I wouldn't peg out if I were you."

"And my Katrine be another man's frau!" continued the German, in a tone of disgust.

"You couldn't blame her, you know," said Gates, in a mischievous spirit. "Of course she couldn't manage the children alone. I'm not married, and I might be willing to take her myself, that is, if anything happened to you."

"You marry my Katrine!" exclaimed Herr Schmidt, almost speechless with indignation.

"I suppose you would prefer that a friend like me should marry her to a stranger, wouldn't you, Herr Schmidt?"

"But I am not dead! I will not die!" roared Johann. "You shall not have her!"

"Oh, of course if you are not going to die, that makes a difference. You said you were, you know."

"I have change my mind—I will go home to mein Katrine myself. She shall have no other husband."

"Good for you! I like your pluck," said Gates.
"Give me your hand."

But Herr Schmidt was offended.

"I will nichts give my hand to der man who will wish to marry mein Katrine," he said obstinately.

"Oh, that was only to oblige you, Herr Schmidt. I thought you might like to have your wife and children taken care of."

"I take care of them myself."

"To be sure you will, if you don't kick the bucket, I see you're riled, Herr Schmidt. My advice is that you smoke a pipe. It will make you feel better."

This suggestion appeared to strike the German favorably, for though he did not deign an articulate reply, he pulled out a pipe, which appeared to have seen much service, and was soon smoking placidly, and to judge from appearance, much more comfortable in mind.

Meanwhile the road had entered the forest and the trees cut off what scanty daylight yet remained.

"How long are these woods?" inquired Gates of the driver.

"Two miles or thereabouts, sir."

"It is a lonely place?"

"Yes, sir; but that isn't the worst of it," said the driver, with a certain significance in his tone.

"Isn't the worst of it? What is, then?"

"Loneliness is better than bad company."

"What are you driving at?"

"I'll tell you, si. There's a set of desperadoes who invest these parts—bandits, we call them—and

these woods are said to be their favorite lurking-place."

"That's pleasant news, Morton," said Gates, turning to the clerk.

Evidently Morton thought so, for he looked very much disturbed at the intelligence.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" he said to the driver.

"I didn't want to make you uncomfortable."

"Then why did you bring us to these woods?"

"Because there is no other way."

"What is dat you say?" interrupted Herr Schmidt at this point.

"Oh, nothing very particular," said Gates. "I hope your life is insured."

"What for?"

"Because there is a gang of robbers in this forest, the driver says. If we meet them, they may take a fancy to cut our throats"

"Let me get out!" roared the frightened Dutchman. "I will nichts stay to have mein throat cut. How will I get home to mein frau?"

"It won't do any good, your getting out," said the driver. "The robbers are just as likely to be behind as before. The best thing to do is to push on."

The driver's words were unexpectedly verified. Before he had fairly finished speaking, two men sprang out from the covert from opposite sides of the road. One seized the horse by the bridle. The other advanced, pistol in hand, to parley with the passengers.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CAPTURED BY HIGHWAYMEN.



“WHAT do you want?” demanded Gates.

“Your money,” said the other briefly.

Gates was a man of courage, and he answered coolly :

“Your answer is brief, and to the point.”

“I meant it to be,” said the highwayman.

“Suppose we object to complying with your polite request, what then?”

“I hold the answer in my hand.”

“Your pistol, I suppose.”

“You are perfectly correct. You must surrender either your money or your life.”

The Dutchman, who had been staring open-mouthed, began to understand the condition of affairs, and was panic-stricken.

“Give him de money,” he said, trembling. “Take his money, good gentleman, and spare my life. I want to go home to mein Katrine.”

Serious as the case was, Gates could not help laughing at the naivete of his Teutonic traveling companion.

“Mr. Highwayman,” he said, “I assure you it isn’t worth your while to rob me. My Dutch friend here is a great capitalist—a banker, I believe. Be content with what he will give you.”

Herr Schmidt was exasperated.

"That is one beeg lie," he said. "I am only a poor saloon-keeper, with a few dollars which I made by selling lager. Let me go, and I will go home to mein Katrine."

"Gentlemen," said the highwayman, "I make no exceptions. You must all empty your pockets."

"Stop a minute!" said Gates, and he suddenly drew a revolver from his pocket and pointed it at the robber."

The latter did not appear disconcerted.

"That won't avail you," he said.

"Why not?" asked Gates. "We are four to two."

"We shall see."

The robber put a whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast.

In answer to this summons six other men burst from the covert, all armed, all dangerous.

"You see," said the first speaker, "we are stronger than you thought. Fire at me, and all your lives are sacrificed. Your triumph will be short."

"Don't shoot, Herr Gates" said the Dutchman in an agony of apprehension. "I don't want to die. What would become of Katrine and the kinder?"

"Gates was a sensible man. He saw that to fire would only be to throw away his own life and that of his companions. This he felt that he had no moral right to do.

"What shall I do?" he asked, turning to Morton.

"It's useless to resist," said the latter nervously.

"And what do you say, Tom?"

"Since these gentlemen are so very pressing, we shall be obliged to yield."

"I believe you are right."

Then turning to the former speaker, who appeared to be the chief of the robbers, he said:

"Will you let us go if we surrender our money?"

"Not to-day. You must follow us."

"Where?"

"Where we shall lead you."

"What is that for?"

"It is unnecessary to ask."

"That is adding insult to injury. I don't like that."

"Perhaps," suggested Tom, "these gentlemen mean to give us some supper and a night's lodging. If so, I go for accepting the invitation. There isn't any hotel about here that I know of. I take their invitation as very kind."

"They mean to make us pay dearly for their accommodation."

"We may as well get something for our money," said Tom.

"That's so. Well, gentlemen, for reasons which it is unnecessary to particularize, we accept your invitation."

"Very good," said the chief. "Put up your revolver, then, first of all, or rather give it to me."

"I would like to keep it."

"Impossible. Give it up."

Gates handed over the weapon unwillingly.

"Now give me yours," said the chief to Morton.

The latter with trembling hand surrendered it. He was deficient in courage, and had sat silent, pale with terror, while the conference had gone on.

"Now, my young bantam," said the robber, turning to Tom, "have you any?"

"Yes, but I should like to keep it."

"Hand it over."

"It doesn't belong to me."

"We'll take care of it for the owner."

"Here it is. Be careful how you handle it, for it's loaded. It might hit my fat friend there."

The Dutchman began to kick at this suggestion.

"Take care, Mr. Robber," he exclaimed. "It might go off all at once, and that would be an end of Johann Schmidt."

"Oh, never mind, mein herr," said Tom. "There are plenty of John Schmidts in the world. One more or less wouldn't make much difference."

"It would make much difference to me," said Johann sensibly, "and mein Katrine and the kinder."

"Well, what next?" asked Gates. "Can we go on?"

"No, you must go with us. First, get down from the wagon."

"What is that for?"

"Ask no questions, but obey," said the highwayman sternly.

"Very good. I suppose, under the circumstances, we must obey orders."

"Get down, Herr Schmidt," said Tom to the Teuton.

"What for? What will he do?" asked the terrified Dutchman.

"I don't know," said Tom gravely; "but I'll tell you what they do sometimes."

"Was?"

"They stand travelers up in a line and shoot them."

"Will they be so wicked?" groaned the poor Dutchman, turning as pale as his florid complexion would admit. "They would not dare!"

"They dare anything, but the only thing we can do is to follow directions."

Tom assisted the poor man from the wagon. Gates and Morton were already out.

"Now," said the chief of the highwaymen, turning to the driver, "you can go. But take heed," he added sternly, "that you say nothing of this adventure. If you do, you are a marked man, and your life will not be worth an hour's purchase."

"I understand," said the man.

Gates turned toward the driver with sudden suspicion.

"I believe you are in league with these men," he said sternly. "You have led us into a trap."

"That is not so," said the driver earnestly. "I swear it."

"The man speaks truth," said the captain. "We have never had anything to do with him."

"Then why don't you keep him as you do us?"

"We don't fly at such game. He is a poor laboring man. We don't prey on such."

"I am a poor laboring man," said Herr Schmidt eagerly. "Let me go, too, good Mr. Robber. I am not rich like these gentlemen."

The chief laughed.

“We can tell better by and by,” he said. “Now, gentlemen, I must trouble you to follow us.”

Escorted by the eight highwaymen, **our four travelers walked on into the depths of the forest.**

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MORTON'S SECRET.



HHEY walked for about a mile, threading the intricacies of the forest. Tom did not particularly mind the walk. In fact, though the idea of being a captive in the hands of robbers was not particularly agreeable, there was a spice of adventure and romance about it which he liked. Gates, too, was a man who took things philosophically, and did not allow himself to be disturbed overmuch by any contretemps like the present. But the other two, namely, Morton and our Teutonic friend, took it more to heart. Morton had a great deal to lose, and he was in terror lest the papers and certificates of stock should be found upon his person. For them he had staked reputation and liberty. For them he was an exile and a fugitive, and he felt that if they were lost he should have little left to live for.

As for Herr Schmidt, he was troubled in more than one way. First, with his portly figure and superfluous load of flesh, he found locomotion, especially in the forest, quite difficult. Then again he had with him three hundred dollars in gold, which he was very reluctant to part with. He felt that they would all be taken from him, and what to do then he did not know. It would take money to go on, it would take money to go back.

On the whole the prospect of his seeing again the fair Katrine, who, good woman, was physically a very good match for her Johann, was indeed small. So he kept groaning as he walked, and indulged, from time to time, in little ejaculations expressive of his unhappy frame of mind.

Tom and Gates walked on together.

"I wonder if it's much farther," said Gates. "Our German friend doesn't look happy."

Tom laughed.

"Perhaps I shouldn't be, if I had such a load to carry."

"And if you had a Katrine and kinder at home."

"Just so. But I haven't. How is it with you?"

"Oh, I'm an independent bachelor, roaming the world for a living. I'm like a cat. However I'm tossed up, I'm sure to land on my feet."

"Then I hope I shall be like a cat, too."

"You don't seem very much disturbed."

"No. It's my first adventure, and I haven't much to lose."

"So with me. Well, Morton, how goes it? You look as if you were attending a funeral."

"Will there be a funeral?" interrupted the terrified Dutchman. "Oh, Gott in Himmel! they will not kill us?"

"No, mein herr, I think not. They'll only take all our money."

Mr. Schmidt groaned piteously, and for the fiftieth time execrated his folly in selling out a lager bier saloon,

in which he was making money, to start in quest of the mines. Ah, little did the plump Katrine and the children, waiting eagerly to hear of his success, dream that he was even now in the clutches of robbers.

But the longest journey has an ending, and this was not a very long journey.

They reached a rude wooden building, backed by a precipitous elevation. There was nothing peculiar in its appearance, except that it had no windows. In fact, the main wonder was, that in this lonely place there should be any building at all.

"Halt, gentlemen," said the captain, "it is here that we stop."

"Is this our hotel?" asked Tom lightly.

"Yes," said the captain, relaxing his stern features with a smile. "Shall I announce to you the rules of this house?"

"What are they?"

"Payment in advance."

Morton's face changed, and the Dutchman looked unhappy.

"I hope your bill won't be unreasonable," said Gates.

"Not at all. We shall not ask more than you have."

"Thank you; you are very considerate."

"We'll begin with you, then," said the captain, addressing Gates.

"Oh, I'm a poor devil. I haven't much."

"Produce what you have."

Gates took out his purse, which proved to contain a hundred and fifty dollars in gold.

"Is that all?"

"Every cent."

"Search him."

Two members of the band advanced and searched him, but nothing more was to be found.

"You are an honest fellow. I won't take all. Here!" and the robber returned twenty dollars of the sum taken.

"Thank you!" said Gates, with a little surprise. "Really, for a robber, you are very polite and honorable."

"Now it's your turn, young bantam," was addressed to Tom.

Our hero produced all his money, as was shown by the subsequent search.

"Good!" said the captain. "Here are twenty for you. It will take you to the mines. Now, old man, it's your turn."

Herr Schmidt would have done well to profit by the example of his companions, and surrendered what he could not retain. But it was too much for his equanimity. He brought out twenty-five dollars, and stoutly asseverated that it was all he had. But the captain was too sharp for him. A skillful examination disclosed eleven times as much more.

"You were richer than you thought," said the captain, in a sarcastic tone.

"It is all I had. I am ruined!" exclaimed Johann piteously. "Good robber, give me back half."

"Not one penny!" returned the chief emphatically.

"You tried to defraud me, and you merit no consideration at my hands. You were not like these gentlemen," and he nodded approvingly in the direction of Gates and Tom.

Herr Schmidt wrung his hands and protested that he was ruined, and that his Katrine and children would all starve.

"Let them cook you, then," said the captain. "That will keep them alive for a month."

But even this suggestion did not mitigate the grief of the unhappy Teuton, who sunk down on a stump near by and bewailed his fate.

Morton was reserved to the last. He was wise enough to give up all his gold, though he had considerably more than either of his companions. But he also was compelled to submit to a search. No money was found, but the belt was discovered.

"What is that?" demanded the captain.

"A belt," faltered Morton.

"What is in it?"

"Papers—no money, I assure you," hurriedly answered Morton.

"If they are papers, we must see them," said the captain.

"They would be of no value to you," said Morton quickly. "They are business papers."

"I must see them," said the captain suspiciously.

Tom had pricked up his ears when he first heard the papers mentioned. His heart beat quick. Were these the securities of which he was in search? He believed

so, and waited anxiously to ascertain. Yet, even if they should prove to be so, how would he be the better off?

He bent his eyes eagerly upon the robber-captain as he opened the belt and revealed the contents.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ROBBERS' DEN.



A! WHAT have we here?" said the robber chief, as he drew out first a certificate of stock in a New York bank.

Morton changed color.

"It is the property of a friend," he said hurriedly.

"And that friend's name is Armstrong—is it not so?"

"Yes," he said, in a low voice.

When Tom heard the name Armstrong, all his doubts were removed. There was no longer a doubt that he had found the absconding clerk. But that was not his only object. He desired also to regain possession of the stolen securities, and they were in the hands of a powerful robber-chief, of whom he was himself the prisoner. Still he was not without hope.

The captain proceeded with his examination of the papers. They proved all to represent value, and could Mr. Armstrong have used them as collateral, he would have been able to avert his failure. Morton looked on with feverish anxiety while this examination was going on.

"May I have the papers back?" he asked nervously.

"Certainly not," said the captain with emphasis.

"They will do you no good."

"How do you know that?" demanded the bandit, fixing his eyes sternly upon his prisoner.

"You cannot negotiate them."

"Can you?"

"No," said Morton hesitatingly.

"How comes it then that you have them in your possession?" asked the captain searchingly.

"I hold them in trust," answered Morton after a pause.

"And where is this Armstrong?"

"In New York."

Morton wiped the perspiration from his brow. He had been forced to make admissions that might prove damaging to him. How did he know but that full particulars of his flight might have been printed, and fallen under the eyes of his fellow-prisoners? If so, he risked his freedom by what he had confessed. He determined to part company with them as soon as possible.

"I shall not give these papers back to you," said the chief. "They don't belong to you, it appears."

"They were confided to me by Mr. Armstrong."

"They are safer in my hands. But we have wasted time enough on this matter, Alonzo, conduct the prisoners into the building."

Now was Tom's opportunity.

He walked boldly up to the robber-chief and said:

"Captain, when you are at leisure, I should like to speak to you on business of importance."

The captain, regarding his youthful appearance, answered with a smile:

"You are a young man to have business of importance."

"It may be so," said Tom, "but it is none the less true. I can say, also, that the business is of as much importance to you as to me."

"Humph!" said the other, evidently surprised. "I doubt that. However, I will humor your whim, youngster. I will give you a chance to show whether you have spoken the truth. But take heed that you do not waste my time."

"I shall not," said Tom confidently. "What I have to say is for your advantage."

A thought occurred to the captain.

This boy might have wealthy friends, and he might be intending to offer a ransom in return for his liberty. His words favored such a supposition, and the chief decided to grant his request.

"Alonzo," he said, "conduct the other prisoners to the place of secrecy. This boy will remain with me."

Alonzo, a stalwart member of the band, bowed in token of obedience.

"Come," he said, turning to Gates, Morton, and the German; "follow me."

"Thank you," said Gates coolly. "I suppose you are about to show us our rooms."

Morton, stupefied at his loss, said nothing. Everything had gone against him. The proceeds of his defalcation had melted into thin air. He complied silently.

But the Teuton was the most obstreperous.

"Where is it you will take me?" he cried. "I will not go."

"Won't you?" asked Alonzo grimly, drawing a formidable-looking knife from his girdle.

"Oh, Gott in Himmel! He will cut mein throat!" ejaculated the horror-stricken Dutchman, his knees trembling beneath him.

"Not if you obey orders," said Alonzo, inclined to laugh.

Herr Schmidt no longer resisted, but shambled in with what haste he could. Alonzo threw open the outer door of the building, disclosing a dark interior. But he lighted a lantern, and then advancing to one side of the apartment, touched some secret spring, and instantly a door flew open, revealing a flight of steps leading downward into a subterranean vault.

Morton recoiled in alarm.

"Are we going down there?" he asked in a startled tone.

Gates took it more philosophically.

"Really," he said, "considering what I have paid at this hotel—in advance, too—I think I deserve better accommodations."

"It is the best we have," said Alonzo briefly.

"Then, my friend, I advise you to give up keeping a hotel."

"You won't find it uncomfortable," said Alonzo.

"It's rather dark, to be sure."

"Must I go down in de cellar?" asked Herr Schmidt, his ample countenance bespeaking his discontent, not to say alarm.

"Yes, and be quick about it," said the robber, losing patience.

Gates led the way, Morton followed, and the Dutchman brought up the rear of the captives. But the stairs were steep, he lost his footing, and, when a little more than half-way down, he tumbled, falling helplessly on the earthen floor. Under the impression that he was dangerously wounded, he burst into a series of cries of a stentorian character which irritated his conductor.

"Stop that nonsense," he said roughly, "or I'll stick this knife into you, you overgrown hog, and then you'll have some reason to scream."

"Hog!" repeated the Teuton, offended. "What for do you call me a hog, I like to know?"

"Because you are one. Pick yourself up, or I'll step on you."

Thus mildly entreated, Herr Schmidt made shift to stand, and on ascertaining that he had really met with no serious injuries, begun to feel better.

Alonzo now took the lead, and conducted the prisoners into an inner cave, where by the light of the lantern several pallets were seen lying upon the earth.

"Lie down there if you like," he said.

"That's all very well," said Gates, "but allow me to remind you that I generally sup before retiring."

"So do I," said Herr Schmidt. "Have you got some good beer and sausages? And I think I would like some schweitzer kase, too."

"None of that for me, please," said Gates.

"You shall have some supper shortly," said the robber, turning to leave them.

They hoped he would leave the lantern, but he evidently thought they had no need of it. A minute later and they found themselves enveloped in darkness.

"This is rather lively," said Gates. "I can't say I like the arrangements of this hotel."

Morton did not answer, but Herr Schmidt begun to bewail his fate and express his conviction that he should never more see his Katrine and the kinder.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE ROBBERS.



TOM WAITED patiently while the captain gave some directions to his subordinates. At length the robber made him a sign to draw near.

"Now, youngster," he said, "you may say what you wish."

Tom looked significantly at two of the band who were within hearing.

"I should like to speak to you in private," he said.

The captain frowned slightly, and was on the point of refusing, but curiosity overcame him.

"Very well," he said. "Follow me."

They went a few rods away.

"Now," he said, "speak."

"What I have to say," Tom begun, "is about those bonds."

"You wish to plead for your friend?" interrupted the captain. "If that is all, I will tell you to begin with, that it is of no use. I shall not give them up."

"You have made a mistake," said Tom quietly. "In the first place, that man is not my friend."

"You were traveling together."

"That is true, but I only met him in San Francisco. I was following him to find out the very thing you helped me to discover to-day."

"What is that?"

"Whether he had those papers."

"What have you to do with the papers?" demanded the captain, in surprise.

"I will tell you, sir. For the want of these papers a New York merchant failed who owed me ten thousand dollars."

"Whew! I begin to see."

"This man—he calls himself Morton, but his real name is Lincoln—was Mr. Armstrong's clerk. He appropriated these securities, worth about eighty thousand dollars, and fled. It was supposed, but not known, that he had come to California. I agreed to follow him and ascertain."

"It is rather strange that you, a boy, should have undertaken such a task. It is a man's work."

"There was no one else to do it. I offered my services, and was accepted. I arrived in San Francisco three months since. I only met this man a few days ago."

"How did you know him?"

"Mr. Armstrong gave me his description."

"Very good. Having found him, you followed him. What good did you think it would do. Supposing he had the papers, how did you expect to get hold of them?"

"That I didn't know. I had no plan," Tom confessed frankly. "But if I were with him, some opportunity might offer. I set out in the hope of that."

"Does he have any suspicion of your motives in accompanying him?"

"No, I am sure he does not. Perhaps if he knew my real name he would. But he thinks I am merely going to the mines in search of fortune."

"You did not know positively that he had these bonds?"

"Not till you took them from him."

The robber paused for a moment's reflection, then he fixed his eyes upon Tom.

"Now, tell me," he said abruptly, "what object you have in telling me all this?"

"I want you to help me," answered our hero boldly.

The captain laughed.

"Oho! you want me to give you these papers. My young friend, I gave you credit for more sense. Do you take me for a philanthropist?"

"No," said Tom, smiling. "I never should make such a mistake."

"Go on, then."

"I will make it worth your while to give me these bonds," said Tom, with emphasis.

"You! How can that be? I have taken all your money, except the few dollars I had the consideration to leave you. Of what other funds have you command?"

"I represent Mr. Armstrong," said Tom. "It is important that he should recover these securities. I am authorized to offer a large sum for them."

"But why should I let them go, when I can obtain their whole value?"

"You can't," said Tom boldly.

"Why not?"

"For the same reason that they have been useless to the clerk who took them. They cannot be negotiated."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I am. The authorities have an accurate list of them all. Information has also been sent to the different institutions and corporations represented. Whoever undertakes to raise money on them is liable to arrest."

"Are you sure of all this?" demanded the robber thoughtfully.

"I am."

"You may be right. In fact, I have sufficient knowledge of business to believe that you are. I was not always what I am now. Years since I was engaged in business in St. Louis. I was unfortunate as so many are. I got into difficulties and made my way out here. Finally, getting desperate, I organized this band, and begun to prey upon the community."

He spoke slowly, and as if talking to himself. Tom listened with surprise and interest. He saw that even robber-captains have a human side, and are not altogether bad.

"Do you like this kind of life?" asked our hero.

The robber shrugged his shoulders.

"A man must live," he said. "I would rather be a prosperous merchant, but I must be satisfied with the mode of life that fortune has opened to me. But that is not to the point," he said, changing his tone. "You said you had something for my advantage to propose. What is it?"

"I will tell you. Give me up those bonds, give me

the means of returning with them to New York, and you shall have ten thousand dollars as a reward."

"You speak confidently, but there are difficulties. How do I know that you will keep faith with me—a social outlaw? Once out of my clutches you will play me false."

"I shall keep my promise," said Tom proudly. "I pledge you my word."

"But you may not be able to keep it. Show me your authority to make this bargain."

Tom drew a paper from his pocket-book—a paper of which we have not hitherto spoken—signed by Mr. Armstrong, empowering him to make such terms as he found necessary to secure the papers.

"I should have made this offer to Morton," he said in conclusion, "but the papers are no longer in his possession. I make them to you."

"I don't see how I'm to receive the money, even if I consent. There is a reward offered for my arrest."

"I wish you could have gone to New York with me," said Tom. "You could retain the papers until you were sure of the reward. I suppose that would be impossible."

The captain looked thoughtful.

"This a matter of importance," he said. "I will take a night to think it over. We will speak again on the subject to-morrow. Meanwhile keep your mouth shut."

"I will," said Tom.

He walked back to the house with his companion

But he did not share the captivity of his fellow travelers. He was allowed to sleep and eat with the robbers, and to have his freedom.

“He’s only a boy,” said the captain by way of explanation. “No need to shut him up.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TOM AND THE ROBBERS.



TOM HAD an easy way of adapting himself to the company he was in. Moreover, being a boy, he was regarded with less distrust than if he had been older. He sat down with the robbers and took part in their conversation, carefully abstaining, however, from disclosing the mission he had revealed to the captain. He had the luck to please his entertainers, if we may give them that name.

After supper the men lit their pipes, and lay down lazily under the trees.

"I've got an extra pipe, my lad, if you'd like to smoke," said Alonzo, who ranked next to the captain. He was, in fact, the lieutenant of the band.

"Thank you," said Tom, "but I don't smoke."

"I smoked before I was of your age, boy."

"Do you think it did you any good?"

"I can't say it did, but it's a comfort, and a merry life is my motto, even if it's a shorter one."

"I may smoke sometime," said Tom, "but I don't believe it does a boy any good."

"You're right there, most likely. What brought you out here?"

"I was going to the mines."

"To make your fortune?"

"Partly, but it was partly the love of adventure."

"You've had your adventure," said Alonzo, smiling grimly.

"Yes," said Tom, "and a pretty expensive one. I should have done better to stay in the city."

"Were you long there?"

"Yes, I was a clerk in a store."

"I'll tell you what you'd better do, my lad," said Alonzo, taking his pipe from his mouth.

"What's that?"

"Join our band."

"And become a——"

"Robber, bandit, or whatever you choose to call it." Tom laughed.

"I don't think my friends would approve of it," he said. "Shall I write to them and ask?"

"I am not joking," said Alonzo. "We want a boy like you to brighten us up. You might be useful besides. We'll give him a fair share of all we make, won't we, men?"

"I'm agreed."

"And so am I."

"And I," said all.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Tom. "It's a compliment, and so I consider it, for you wouldn't make the offer if you didn't like my company, but to be frank I don't think I should like it."

"He's right."

It was the captain who spoke.

"He's right, boys. I'm a robber myself, and am

likely to be, but I won't ask him to be. His life is before him—a bright and prosperous one it may be, and I for one won't ask him to spoil it by taking to the road. It's well enough for us, for there's no other chance for us."

"Captain," said Alonzo, "you ain't turning pious, are you?"

He spoke lightly, but he regarded the captain attentively as he spoke.

The captain laughed, but it was a forced laugh.

"That isn't in my line," he said. "I thought you knew me too well for that, Alonzo."

"Of course I do. I thought mayhap you'd got the blues, or was getting sick of our company."

"You have no reason to think that, because I don't want the boy to follow our example. If you had a son of your own, Alonzo, you wouldn't train him up to his father's trade, would you?"

"Yes, I would," said Alonzo doggedly. "The world owes me a living; the rich have more than belongs to them, and I am ready to relieve them of what belongs to the poor. What do you say, men?"

"That's the way to talk," said all in substance.

They were social outlaws—offenders in the eye of the law, but Alonzo's specious reasoning gave an air of respectability to their profession, and they were ready to adopt it as their own.

"It may be so," said the captain, "but I wouldn't ask a boy to join us."

He got up from the grass on which he had been reclining with the rest, and walked thoughtfully away.

"Something's come over the captain," said Alonzo, looking after him.

"I don't know but the captain's right after all," said another of the men.

"What, Jack, are you going to turn back on us."

"Not I, nor the captain neither, but what he said about a boy's taking up our business came home to me. I've got a boy somewhere about the age of that youngster. He don't know what his father is, and he sha'n't know, if I can help it. I ain't good for much, but I want that boy to grow up respectable."

"Suppose we change the subject," said Alonzo, adding with a sneer, "piety's spreading. I sha'n't be surprised, Jack, to hear that you and the captain have turned missionaries. As for me, I ain't partial to a black suit and a white choker."

"You'd prefer a different kind of a choker," suggested Jack.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Alonzo roughly.

"No offense, lieutenant," said Jack. "Let a man have his joke. We're all in the same boat, as far as that goes."

But Alonzo still looked moody, and did not seem inclined to accept the apology.

Upon this Jack, to restore good feelings, brought out his violin, for he was a little of a musician, and begun to play a lively dancing tune.

"Let's have a dance," said one.

This suggestion was well received, and the members

of the band begun to leap about to the inspiring airs of the fiddle.

Then it was that a bright thought entered the mind of one of the robbers—we will call him Bill.

“Have out the Dutchman,” he said. “Let us make him dance.”

This proposal was received with a shout of laughter, in which Alonzo joined as heartily as the rest. Even Tom, though he sympathized with his fellow-captive, could not help shouting with laughter as he pictured to himself the burly form prancing up and down in the mazy dance.

“Good!” said Alonzo. “Bill, you and Dick go in and bring out the prisoners. We’ll have some sport.”

The two men, nothing loth, jumped up and disappeared within the building. After some delay they reappeared, followed by Gates and Morton, and leading between them, bewildered and terrified, the massive figure of our Teutonic friend, Herr Schmidt. He gazed about him in evident affright, and ejaculated:

“What will you do mit me? Don’t kill me, goot gentlemen. I am only one poor Dutchman.”

“We won’t hurt you, mynheer,” said Alonzo, “that is if you obey our commands. You must dance a jig.”

“I cannot dance at all,” said Herr Schmidt in alarm. “Indeed I cannot, gentlemen.”

“Oh, you needn’t be particular about the steps, but dance you must. We are all going to dance. Jack, strike up a tune, and let the fun begin.”

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HERR SCHMIDT DANCES.



HE FIDDLER struck up a lively polka. The members of the band, two by two, begun to dance. Gates, entering into the spirit of the joke, impressed Tom as a not unwilling partner, and Morton was seized by one of his captors and compelled to join in. But Herr Schmidt looked on stupidly, and stood motionless.

Alonzo gave a signal for the music to cease.

“Why don’t you dance?” he demanded sternly of the German.

“Ich kann nicht. I have never learn,” said Johann, in a tone of apology.

“Then I will teach you,” and the lieutenant seized the unwilling Teuton, and forced him to jump and caper as well as his great bulk would permit.

Gradually the rest stopped, and fixed their eyes upon the Dutchman’s unwilling gambols. The lieutenant had threatened him with instant death if he did not do his best, and the distressed Teuton, fearing to be shot, exerted himself to please his captor.

If the reader will imagine a frisky elephant, he can form some idea of mynherr’s wonderful feats, as in panic-stricken resignation he hopped and jumped at the will of the lieutenant. But he was short of breath and

"THE LIEUTENANT THREATENED THE DUTCHMAN WITH INSTANT DEATH IF HE DID NOT DO HIS BEST."



yielded at last to fatigue, sinking in a heap upon the earth.

"I can no more," he said, panting heavily "I am ausgespielt!"

"He looks played out," said the lieutenant. "Dick, bring him a drop of brandy."

"Have you any lager," asked Herr Schmidt eagerly.

"No; don't deal in that article. Brandy is better."

"Nothing so good as lager," murmured Johann, closing his eyes and panting.

Nevertheless he took the brandy, and was mischievously plied with more till, sad as I am to record it, the worthy Johann got decidedly fuddled, and losing sight of his unfortunate position, volunteered a German song, which convulsed his audience with mirth.

"You're a jolly old boy," said the lieutenant, slapping him on the shoulder. "Won't you stay with us and take up our trade?"

"What's der wages?" asked Johann gravely.

"Fifty dollars a month and found."

"You give me fifty dollars a month, and then you find me," repeated the Dutchman soberly.

Probably this was not meant as a joke, but it was so understood, and Herr Schmidt was amazed at the universal merriment which followed. But he bethought himself of a condition.

"I must have my Katrine and my kinder here, too."

"What's kinder?" asked Jack.

"Children. I know enough German for that," said Tom.

"I don't know about that," said the lieutenant gravely. "Is Katrine beautiful?"

"She was once," said Johann. "She is now one fine woman."

"And you will promise to help us in all our undertakings?"

"What will you have me to do?" asked the Teuton with returning intelligence.

"Stop travelers on the highway—make them give up their money—and if they won't, shoot 'em," said the lieutenant.

"You want me to be one robber!" exclaimed Herr Schmidt in horror, "and kill de people! I cannot do it. I am a good man. I am not a robber."

"If you will join us," said the lieutenant with a wink to his men, "we'll make you our captain—that is, if you steal a good deal of money."

"Nein, nein!" said Herr Schmidt vehemently. "I will not do it—Katrine would leave me. She would not live with her Johann if he was become a robber."

"Is that your fixed, unalterable determination?" demanded the lieutenant, assuming a fierce look.

"Ich verstehe nicht—I not understand," stammered the captive.

"You won't accept our flattering proposal, then?"

"I cannot indeed, my good friend," said the German piteously. "I shall make one very poor robber."

"Fancy him at the head of the band," said Jack laughing.

The idea was ludicrous. The robbers laughed till the

tears run down their cheeks, and the other three prisoners joined in.

The lieutenant recovered himself first. He frowned, and in a harsh voice said, in a mock, imperious tone:

“Remove him at once to the dungeon. He has spurned my offer. He despises our companionship. Let him prepare for a most terrible retribution.”

The affrighted Dutchman was borne back to the subterranean apartment, groaning piteously under the impression that he was to be killed on the morrow. But his fatigue was great, and in spite of his mental distress, half an hour had not passed before snoring of a particularly boisterous character apprised his fellow-prisoners that he was asleep. Happy are they who can so readily command the blissful oblivion of slumber

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S RESOLVE.



OM WAS up and about early the next morning. But there was one who was earlier than he. On leaving the robbers he saw the captain pacing to and fro, apparently engrossed by his reflections. When he saw Tom he beckoned to him.

"Take a walk with me," he said abruptly. "I want to speak to you."

Tom, of course, joined him promptly.

"Let us go further away," said the robber, looking about him cautiously. "What I have to say is for your ears alone."

"I shall take care to keep it secret," said Tom in a low voice.

"You must, for I am about to say what will compromise my safety. But, in the first place, can you guarantee that I shall receive ten thousand dollars on the delivery of these papers?"

"I can," said Tom promptly. "Mr. Armstrong has authorized me to make such an offer."

"Is he a man to be relied upon? You know my position. I am an outlaw. I cannot appeal to the law in my own behalf."

"I understand your position fully," said Tom. "As to your being an outlaw, I have nothing to do with that,

nor has Mr. Armstrong. You have in your possession the papers which we need. It is worth our while to pay ten thousand dollars. You may be sure the money will be paid, and that no trap will be set for you. Should you be recognized, it will not be through any information obtained from me or Mr. Armstrong."

"That is enough, said the captain. "Though you are only a boy, there is something about you that I can trust. You understand business. You have gone to the root of the matter without any unnecessary words. I will confide in you, and in so confiding I put my life in your hands."

Tom listened with surprise. He could not understand what was coming.

The captain proceeded:

"You know me as the captain of a band of robbers, but you do not understand that I have in a manner been forced into my position. I don't like the life I am leading. I want to leave it, and I think I see the way. With the money you promise me, I will change my name, go to some obscure place, and lead a respectable life, entering upon some business of which I shall not be ashamed."

"Do so," said Tom earnestly. "I am glad to hear you say this, and I will do what I can to help you."

The captain appeared pleased with his prompt sympathy and proceeded:

"Of course my plan must be a profound secret. If the band were to learn what I propose I should never live to leave California. They would regard me as a

traitor and a renegade, and would feel that they were entitled to a share in the money obtained for these bonds."

"How, then, will you manage to leave?" asked Tom, interested.

"I will tell you. I shall say that I am going to San Francisco in disguise to negotiate these securities, and will bring back the proceeds. I hope this will deceive them. But the one whom I dread the most is Alonzo."

"The lieutenant?"

"Yes; he is my second in command. Our relations have not always been cordial. He is in the habit of exceeding his proper authority, and more than once I have been compelled to reprimand him publicly. Though he has taken it quietly, I have reason to believe that he never forgave me—that, in fact, he cherishes a secret grudge against me, and that he would willingly undermine my authority with the band. He has not as yet had an opportunity."

"I should think, then, that he would be glad to have you leave, in order that he might succeed to your authority."

"That would not satisfy him. He would not be willing to have me better myself in so doing. He would prefer that I should be cast adrift in disgrace."

"Have you decided upon your plan?" asked our hero.

"Yes; after breakfast I will dismiss you and the other prisoners. They will go on to the mines, I suppose."

"Yes, I think so."

"You will not."

"No; I shall return to San Francisco."

"Good. I shall follow you. It would create suspicion if we should go together. You shall give me your address there, and I will join you. Then we will take the first steamer to New York."

Tom nodded. He felt that the plan was good one, and that he was now in a fair way to accomplish successfully the object which had brought him so far from home.

"Agreed," he said. "Call for me at Burton's clothing store, — Street. Even if I am not staying there, you will learn where I am."

The captain repeated the name two or three times.

"I will not forget it," he said. "Of one thing I will apprise you. You must not expect to know me at first meeting."

"Why not?"

"I shall be cleverly disguised. It is necessary, for unfortunately I am not altogether unknown to the authorities. Once let me get away from California, and I shall feel comparatively safe. I may as well tell you by what name I prefer to be known. I shall call myself James Davenport. Under that name, if fortune favors me, I hope to build up a respectable future, far from the scene of my lawless proceedings."

Tom knew little of the man who was walking beside him, except what he had chosen to communicate. He knew not in what ways he had violated the laws, nor did he now take this into consideration. He pictured him as a man who wanted to forsake the evil of his ways,

and become a respectable and law-abiding citizen, and with the instinct of a generous nature, he felt like doing all in his power to help him, apart from any selfish interest of his own. Instinctively he held out his hand, and the captain grasped it in his own.

"Whatever may happen," said the robber, "I shall have full confidence in your word. You have it in your power to denounce me to the authorities in San Francisco, but I am sure you will not do it."

"You only do me justice," said Tom.

"Or you could reveal my purpose to these men under my command, and this would insure my death, provided they had confidence in your word."

"You are not afraid of that?" asked Tom, looking him full in the face.

"No," said the captain. "As I said in the first place, there is something about you that enlists my confidence. I would trust you as myself."

"You may," said Tom.

They had turned back, and were again near the building occupied by the band. Only one was stirring. This was Alonzo, who watched their approach.

"You are up early, captain," he said.

"Yes," returned the captain carelessly; "I have been taking a walk. I did not sleep well."

"What is on his mind?" thought the lieutenant. "Something is up. I can see it in his manner. I must watch him."

"I don't like his looks," thought Tom. "He is a dangerous man. The captain does right in suspecting him."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AN AVENGER ON THE TRACK.



MR. BURTON was putting back some goods upon the shelves, when Tom walked quietly in. This was four days later.

"Tom!" he exclaimed in amazement. "What brings you here?"

"My legs," answered Tom smilingly.

"But I thought you were at the mines?"

"I got part way there, but I changed my mind and came back."

Mr. Burton looked a little perplexed.

"I wish I had known in time; but I have filled your place, and though I would much rather employ you, I don't think it would be right to discharge your successor."

"Nor I," said Tom promptly. "You have made a mistake, Mr. Burton. I am not going to stay in San Francisco. I am going back to New York."

"But I thought you were after some papers?" said his employer.

"I expect to take them back with me."

"You have indeed been fortunate. How did you succeed?"

"I would tell you, but I am not at liberty, as it would involve another's secret."

"At all events, Tom, you have shown yourself a man

of judgment. You have succeeded where many a man would have failed."

"Perhaps I have," said Tom; "and perhaps the fact of my being a boy has been in my favor. I can see myself how it has helped me."

"Where are you stopping, Tom?"

"At the California Hotel."

"That is expensive. You may stay with me, and welcome."

"Thank you, Mr. Burton," said Tom warmly. "I will accept your kind invitation, partly because I really cannot afford to stay at an expensive hotel, partly because I prefer the privacy of a house to a hotel."

"All right. Settle your bill at the hotel, and come at once."

"Thank you, but you must allow me in return to occupy a part of the day with my old duties in the shop."

"I shall be glad to have you, as it will give me some relief. As your successor needs breaking in to his duties, I have been considerably confined."

This arrangement was satisfactory to Tom, as he felt that the obligation now would not be wholly on his side. He had an independent spirit, and he did not like to receive favors of a pecuniary nature.

He was behind the counter in the afternoon, when a man came in, who was by no means a specimen of manly beauty. He had a good figure, indeed, but his hair was bright red, and he had whiskers of the same color, while his complexion was mottled. In addition his eyes were obscured by an enormous pair of spectacles.

"An odd-looking specimen," thought Tom.

The man walked up to the counter, and leaning over, said in a low voice:

"Can I speak with you in private?"

Tom started. It occurred to him that the man might be crazy, and he hesitated.

"What can you wish to speak to me about?" he said.

"I don't know you."

"About a matter of importance."

Tom was more and more surprised.

"Frederick," he said to his successor. "I am going out a few minutes with this gentleman. I shall soon be back."

He took his hat and went out, followed by the red-haired man.

"Now," he said, turning to the stranger, "you may say what you wish."

"You don't appear to know me," said the other.

"I never saw you before in my life."

"Don't be too sure of that."

"I should remember you."

The other laughed.

"On account of my beauty, I suppose," he remarked.

"If you choose to put it that way—yes," said Tom.

"Oh, I am not sensitive as to my looks. By the way, you haven't inquired my name."

"What is it?"

"Davenport," said the other significantly.

"Why," said Tom starting, as for the first time light flashed upon him, "you are——"

“Hush!” said the other impetuously. “What I was is not to be breathed in this city. I am in peril till I leave it.”

“I never should have known you,” said Tom in a low voice. “Your disguise is complete. Even now when I know the truth, I cannot realize that it is to you I am speaking.”

“So much the better, for sharp eyes may be upon us. There are those who are interested in ferreting me out. But let that pass. Come with me to some place where we shall be safe from prying eyes and curious ears.”

Ten minutes brought them to such a place. They threw themselves down upon a grassy spot, and the captain proceeded.

“The next steamer starts on Saturday. We must take passage.”

“There is only one difficulty in the way,” said Tom. “I have no money.”

“There will be no difficulty about that. I will secure two passages, one for myself and the other for you.”

“Thank you.”

“We will meet on board, for it is best that we should not be too much together. Where are you staying?”

“At the place where you found me.”

“I am at an obscure boarding-house. I avoid the publicity of a hotel.”

“Tell me how you got away without incurring suspicion.”

“I am afraid I have incurred suspicion. I came ostensibly to negotiate these bonds.”

"You have them with you?"

"Yes; I was not likely to forget them. The band generally accepted my reason for going, but I could see that Alonzo was not satisfied. There was a look on his face that said so. But he said nothing in words. I started, promising to be back as soon as possible. I hope never while I live to look upon the face of any one of them again."

"You have managed well, it seems to me," said Tom. "I don't think there can be any danger, even if the lieutenant does suspect you."

"I will tell you what I most fear," said the other, in a low voice.

"What is that?"

"That he may follow me—that even now he may be in the city."

Tom shook his head.

"I don't believe there is any chance of it," he said.

"So I hope," said the captain. "But we will not stay too long together. It may excite suspicion."

"When shall you engage passage?"

"This very day. I don't know why it is, but I feel a feverish anxiety to get away. I am not inclined to be nervous, but I feel as if danger were hovering over me like a cloud, and likely at any time to burst and overwhelm me."

"I never have any presentiments of evil," said Tom. "I am always hopeful."

"You are fortunate," said the other thoughtfully, "but you are a boy, and it is natural at your age to be

sanguine and hopeful. I was so, too, when at your age of life. But I will shake off this feeling and do what is necessary. Let me return."

They rose from their grassy seat and took their way back to Mr. Burton's shop.

On their way they encountered an old man with snowy beard, half bowed over, clad in rags, and apparently in extreme poverty.

"A few pennies, good gentlemen," he whined. "Only a few pennies in charity. I am miserably poor."

The captain drew out a silver coin and put it into the old man's hand. Tom did the same.

"He looks wretched enough," said Tom.

"Yes."

Scarcely were the two a few rods away, than the old beggar lifted his eyes and looked after them.

"So, Signor Captain," he muttered, "this is your game. I have not followed you for nothing. You are intriguing with that boy to leave us all in the lurch, are you? We shall see."

The old beggar was Alonzo.

CHAPTER XL

THE CAPTAIN'S FATE.



THE CAPTAIN'S presentiments were verified. The suspicions of his lieutenant had been aroused by his unusual manner, nor had they been allayed by the explanation he gave of his intended journey. Immediately after the captain's departure he had convened the members of the band, and harangued them thus:

"Boys, I have something to say to you that affects our common interests. The captain has left us for a visit to the city, and he has explained his reasons for going. He will try to negotiate the bonds taken from one of our late prisoners. Very likely he has told us the truth. He will doubtless get what he can for them, but *will he come back?*"

At this significant question the robbers started, and their faces looked dark and threatening.

"What makes you think he won't, lieutenant?" asked one.

"Human nature," replied Alonzo. "If he gets a good round sum, say ten or twenty thousand dollars, he will be tempted to keep it all himself, and leave us to our fate. Who shall say there is no danger? What should hinder his taking the next steamer for New York?"

Alonzo saw by the fierce looks of his adherents that his suggestion had produced its effect. He continued:

"I noticed, just before the captain's departure, that he acted strangely; he took walks by himself, and evidently had some plan in view. I noticed also that he had a confidential talk with the boy, Tom. What does all this mean?"

"But the bonds didn't belong to the boy."

"No, but there were other matters in which he might wish to obtain information from the boy. Again, this boy was on his way to the mines. After his talk with the captain, he changed his plans and returned to the city. Shall I tell you what I think?"

"Yes, yes."

"I think, then, that the boy and he were old acquaintances, that he brought the captain a message from outside, and that this and the bonds decided him to abandon us."

"Let us pursue him! Let us kill him!" exclaimed the exasperated robbers.

"Hold! not so fast. Let him be followed, but by one only. Remember, he may be innocent. He may mean to deal fairly and squarely with us. If so, let him still remain our honored chief. But if he means to play us false"—here the speaker's face grew stern—"let him die the death of a traitor."

"How shall we find out?" asked one.

"Appoint me to follow and watch him. I will go in disguise. I will see for myself what he does. I will dog

his steps, and if it be true that he would desert us, I will be your avenger. Shall it be so?"

"Yes, yes, let Alonzo go!" was the unanimous shout.

"Be it so. Boys, I go as your messenger. I go into danger, but I go to serve your interests. Whoever may be found wanting, you shall never find me a traitor."

He finished his harangue, and an hour later he was on his way to San Francisco, which he reached nearly as soon as the captain.

He met his superior in command for the first time on the occasion mentioned in the last chapter. He penetrated his disguise at once, assisted thereto by his companion's presence. As we know, the captain was not so fortunate, and in the bowed and discrepit beggar who implored alms, he failed to recognize his subordinate—the man whom he had the greatest cause to fear—nor did he observe that the beggar followed him. Had he done so, his suspicions would hardly have been aroused.

After the captain left Tom, he made his way to the office of the steamship company. Alonzo's keen eyes lighted up when he saw his destination. Now his suspicions were verified.

"It is as I thought," he said to himself. "The captain has betrayed us. Arrived in New York, he may make his peace with the authorities and renounce his old comrades, and bring us to capture and death. He shall never do it! He shall never live to do it!"

As we know, he did the captain wrong in this suspicion. Though he fully intended to forsake the band and hoped never to meet any member of it again, it

never once occurred to him to denounce them. There is honor among thieves—so the proverb has it—and he would have shrunk from such a betrayal.

The captain went back to his place of temporary sojourn. Now that his object was so far accomplished, and ticket secured for New York, he deemed it discreet to keep himself as much out of the way as possible till the time came for going on board the steamer.

Every evening Tom came to see him. He handed our hero his ticket, and the evening before sailing he handed Tom the belt containing the papers and securities, much to our hero's amazement. The captain read his wonder in his eyes.

"You are surprised that I give you them so soon," he said.

Yes," said Tom. "Of course I am glad to have them in charge, but I did not suppose you would trust me with them."

"I will tell you why," said the robber-chief. "I have a presentiment of evil. I feel that some one of my old comrades is on my track. Should evil befall me, I do not want the bonds to fall into their hands. I prefer, if they cannot benefit me, that they should go to you."

"Thank you," said Tom, "but I heartily hope that you are mistaken—that you will leave this city in safety, and far away have a chance to redeem you" past life."

"I think you are sincere," said the captain, taking his hand. "I trust you more than any other living being. For that reason, whatever comes to me, I wish that you may prosper."

The day of sailing came. Tom and the captain went on board the steamer. As they stood by the railing and looked over the side, Tom said in a low voice:

“Where are your presentiments now? Nothing has happened.”

The captain shook his head.

“It is not too late yet,” he said.

He had scarcely finished the sentence than a report was heard. The captain pressed his hand convulsively to his breast and dropped upon the deck. He never uttered another word. When he was taken up he was dead.

Tom looked about him in horror, expecting to see the assassin. But there was no one who looked likely to commit the deed. No one thought of suspecting a decrepit and infirm old beggar, who tottered slowly away from the wharf with head bowed down.

“The traitor is punished! We are avenged!” he muttered. “Now I am the captain!”

But Alonzo's triumph was premature. He had been seen in the act of firing the pistol. He was arrested, and identified as a member of the famous band that had been the scourge of the interior. He was tried, convicted and executed within the space of one month. So the captain was revenged, and the band, now without a head, was speedily disbanded.

CHAPTER XLI.

TOM ADOPTS A RICH UNCLE.



OM WAS very much shocked at the tragical fate of his companion. Though he had been an outlaw and a chief of a noted gang of robbers, it had been his purpose to break away from his evil life and his companions in crime, and to lead henceforth a blameless life.

The chance had been taken from him. His presentiments of evil had been verified, and he had been summoned without other warning into the presence of his Maker.

As he sunk upon the deck, he was surrounded by a crowd of passengers.

"Who did this?" exclaimed the captain, naturally turning to Tom for information.

"I don't know, sir," said Tom.

"You know this gentleman, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, a little. I made his acquaintance while on the way to the mines."

"Do you know his name?"

"He called himself Davenport."

"You say, called himself?"

"It was not his real name. He told me he had enemies from whom he feared injury. Therefore he concealed his real name."

"Do you know his real name?"

"No, sir."

"You think the shot was fired by one of the enemies of whom he stood in fear?"

"I feel sure of it."

The question arose what disposition to make of the money left by the murdered man. Eight hundred dollars in gold were found in his possession, but this question was solved by a paper found in his pocket-book.

It was to this effect:

"Should anything happen to me, which is quite possible, I desire that whatever property I leave may be given to my young friend and fellow-voyager, known as Thomas Temple."

"It seems you are his heir," said the captain, when the examination was over.

"I?" said Tom, in surprise.

"Yes. Probably the gentleman had few friends and took a fancy to you. I suppose there need be no formalities, except to give you the property at once."

This decision of the captain was approved by the passengers, and Tom found himself unexpectedly rich. But he felt that he could not consent to retain the money for his own use, except, indeed, a sum equal to that of which he had been robbed. It was stolen property, and he could not conscientiously retain it. He resolved on reaching New York to give it to some charitable association, where it might be a public benefit.

A new surprise awaited him. Among the passengers was Mr. Stoddard, the invalid who had been his companion on the voyage out.

He was pleased to find that the old gentleman's health had been materially improved by his brief residence in California.

"I am delighted to see you again, my young friend," said Mr. Stoddard. "I sought for you in San Francisco, but was told that you had gone to the mines. Then I gave up all hopes of seeing you, but I left directions with my bankers to advance you any sum which you might require, should you apply to them."

"How have I deserved so much kindness?" said Tom, surprised and grateful.

"You showed me attention when I required it, Tom. You gave me hours of your society when the companionship of younger persons would have been more to your taste. This you did out of the kindness of your heart, and I shall not soon forget it."

"Mr. Stoddard, you exaggerate my merits," said Tom modestly.

"I don't think I do. At all events, I have taken a strong liking to you. I am without near relatives; I am rich and lonely. Will you give me the right to provide for your future? Will you let me regard you as my adopted son?"

Tom was surprised at this unexpected offer, and he felt that it was not to be lightly rejected. But it is due to him to say that he was urged quite as much by a feeling of sympathy for Mr. Stoddard's loneliness as by his own interest to decide in the affirmative. He felt that he could respect and like him, and with proper acknowledgments of his kindness he gave his consent.

Mr. Stoddard's eyes lighted up with pleasure.

"Thank you, Tom," he said earnestly. "You have given me something to live for. Now I shall have an interest in life apart from the care of my health. I will pay your expenses, and make you an allowance of a thousand dollars a year, if you think that will be sufficient for the present."

"You overwhelm me with kindness," said Tom. "I don't know what to say, except that I hope you will never have cause to repent your kindness."

"I am sure I never shall," said the old gentleman. "When we reach the city of New York I will consult you as to your plans in life. You may be interested to know that I have a house in the city and a country place on the Hudson. I hope you will like them both, as each will be your home."

"A place on the Hudson!" exclaimed Tom. "I am sure I shall like that. Have you any saddle-horses?"

"Two; though I fear they have grown lazy from disuse. You must give them some exercise."

"Trust me for that," said Tom.

"One thing more. I think you had better call me uncle. The name will give you a claim upon me in the eyes of the world, and moreover, I shall be proud of such a spirited young nephew."

"All right, uncle," said Tom, smiling.

CHAPTER XLII.

TOM'S RETURN.



R. ARMSTRONG sat in his counting-room deep in thought. An arrangement had been made with his creditors by which he was allowed to go on. It was his ambition to repay them their confidence by paying all claims upon him dollar for dollar. But he found it up-hill work. His resources were contracted, and success was, to say the least, problematical. This was the reason of his present abstraction. He was anxiously considering what measures to adopt in order to facilitate the attainment of the end he had in view.

“If I only had the eighty thousand dollars’ worth of securities that scoundrelly clerk robbed me of,” he said to himself, “all would be well. I could clear off all liabilities to-day, and start afresh with the most encouraging chances of success. But I suppose there isn’t one chance in a hundred of my ever recovering a cent from that source.”

Just then an intimate friend, Hugh Osborn, entered.

“You seem in a brown study, Armstrong,” he said.

“Yes; I was thinking about my affairs.”

“Your creditors have allowed you to go on?”

“Yes, and I want to justify their confidence.”

“Oh, you’ll do that.”

"I hope so, but business is dull, and it's hard work getting back to my old position. If I only had the money Lincoln abstracted, all would be well."

"What efforts have you made to recover it?"

"I have informed the police, but thus far I have heard nothing."

"Have you done nothing further?"

"Yes," said Mr. Armstrong, hesitating. "I have sent a special messenger to California to hunt up the defaulter."

"Come, that's enterprising. Who is your special messenger?"

"You will laugh at me if I tell you."

"Why should I?"

"Because my messenger is a boy of sixteen."

"You are not in earnest, surely?"

"Yes, I am."

"What could induce you to employ a mere boy?"

"He is one of my creditors—Tom Temple. He volunteered to go, and asked for no allowance for expenses."

"Very kind, no doubt, but you might as well have sent nobody."

"You may be right. Still Tom is a bright, smart lad."

"I hope you don't base any very extravagant hopes on this mission."

"I never have been very sanguine, Hugh, for the mission presents difficulties even to man. Still I would rather trust Tom than some men."

"My old friend, you are foolish to expect anything from a boy of sixteen. Such boys are confident, no doubt; it is a characteristic of that age, but what could one do against a crafty rogue?"

"You may be perfectly right. Still you wouldn't speak of Tom with such contempt if you knew him. He will make a very smart man."

"I see he has managed to impress you with a belief in his ability."

"It is true. I have seldom met a boy who seemed so plucky and self-reliant."

"That may all be, but he will fail in his mission. Excuse my expressing myself so positively, but it isn't worth while to deceive yourself. Face all the difficulties of your situation, and form no groundless hopes."

The merchant was about to reply, when the door of the counting-room opened, and with an elastic step in walks our hero.

"Tom Temple!" ejaculated the merchant in amazement.

"Yes, Mr. Armstrong, it is I," said Tom. "I am glad you haven't forgotten me."

"So this is the young man you sent on a wild-geese chase, Armstrong?" said Hugh Osborn, smiling.

Tom turned toward the speaker.

"Perhaps it was a wild-geese chase," he said quietly, "but it is possible to catch wild geese sometimes."

"What do you mean, Tom?" inquired Mr. Armstrong in excitement.

"*I mean this, that I've recovered the bonds, and here they are!*"

And to the astonishment of both merchants, Tom produced the belt and drew out the contents.

"As I live, they are all here!" exclaimed Mr. Armstrong.

"Impossible!" ejaculated Hugh Osborn, arching his brows.

"Quite possible," said Tom. "Don't you believe your eyes?"

"What do you say now, Hugh, to the absurdity of employing a boy of sixteen in such a commission? Very foolish, no doubt, but *here are the bonds!*"

"Did you recover those bonds yourself, young man?" asked Hugh Osborn.

"I rather think I did," said Tom; "that is, with the help of a highwayman. You see I needed a little assistance."

"Give us the story, Tom," said Mr. Armstrong.

So Tom told the story, which was listened to with astonishment by the two merchants.

"What do you say now, Hugh?" demanded Mr. Armstrong in triumph.

"Say? I say that if this young man wants a situation, I'll engage him this very day to enter my counting-room."

"I think he ought to give me the preference. What do you say, Tom? Will you accept a clerkship at a hundred dollars a month?"

"Thank you, gentlemen, both," said Tom, bowing, "but the fact is, I've adopted a rich uncle, and I can't make any arrangements without consulting him."

CHAPTER XLIII

CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES.



“NATHAN,” asked Mrs. Middleton, “have you ever heard anything of our old boarder, Tom Temple?”

“No, my dear, except that he went to California in the steerage, I believe. I suspect he was very destitute.”

“I am glad of it,” said Mrs. Middleton emphatically. “It does me good to see pride have a fall, and that boy was the proudest upstart I ever met.”

“He certainly had a great appetite, my dear, and was very particular about his accommodations.”

“To think of his insisting on a mattress! Really. Nathan, we were fools to give up to him.”

“Well, my dear, we got very high board for him.”

“Very true; I wouldn’t have stood his impudence otherwise. Squire Davenport’s family got disgusted with him. He put on his airs even with them. So he went in the steerage, did he?”

“So I heard.”

“I warrant he would have been glad to get back to our home, much as he turned up his nose at it.”

Here there was a knock at the door, and a minute later the servant entered, ushering in our hero.

“Good gracious!” ejaculated Mr. Middleton. “Is it you, Thomas?”

"Yes, sir," said Tom; "here I am, alive and kicking. I didn't think you'd remember me. How do you do, Mrs. Middleton?"

"I am well," said the lady stiffly.

"I thought you were in California, Thomas," said Mr. Middleton.

"So I was."

"We heard that you were reduced to going by steerage," remarked Mrs. Middleton with spiteful triumph.

"You were misinformed," said Tom coolly, "I went first-class, and returned in the same way."

"Oh, indeed. I heard that you had a few hundred dollars left. You must have spent it all by this time."

"You will doubtless be glad to learn that I have got my fortune all back," said Tom, glancing mischievously at the faces of his friends, in which surprise contended with mortification.

"Is that so?" ejaculated Mr. Middleton.

"Quite so. The ship supposed to be lost has returned; Mr. Armstrong has recovered sufficiently to pay me back my ten thousand dollars, and the mining stock turns out to be good. Besides that I have been adopted by a rich man, who has made me his heir."

"My dear Tom," exclaimed Mr. Middleton, whose opinion of our hero had risen about a hundred degrees, "permit me to congratulate you. I always felt a deep, paternal interest in the welfare of my dear friend's son. I am truly glad to hear that your fortune is recovered. If you would be content again to share our humble home, we would gladly receive you back on the same

terms as before." And he pressed Tom's hand very cordially.

"Mr. Temple," said Mrs. Middleton, her face wreathed in smiles, "won't you stay to dinner at least? I shall be truly glad to have you."

"Thank you," said Tom. "Since you are so pressing I will; but I am afraid I can't come back to board, as my uncle wishes me to reside with him."

Before Mr. Middleton could express his disappointment, Squire Davenport was ushered into the room. He stopped short at the sight of Tom, and frowned slightly, looking to Mr. Middleton for an explanation.

"Squire Davenport," said Nathan, "you will be glad to hear that our young friend has recovered his fortune. Indeed he tells me that he is richer than ever. Isn't it so, Thomas?"

"Yes, sir, I believe so."

"Ahem!" said the squire, pausing long enough to change his voice and expression. "I am very glad to hear it. Master Temple, you were once intimate at my house. Won't you come to tea this evening?"

"Thank you," said Tom demurely, "if you think it will be agreeable to your family."

"They will all be delighted to see you," said the squire hastily.

"Thank you, I'll come," said Tom.

To judge by Tom's reception, all the Davenports were very fond of him. And yet the day before they would have vied with one another in speaking contemptuously of him. But *then* he was supposed to be poor. Now

he was master of one fortune, and heir to another. **I**t is only the way of the world.

There was one of the family whom Tom was really glad to meet, and that was Mary Somers, to whom he paid much more attention than to Imogene, greatly to the latter's disgust. Poor Mary had to submit to more than one covert sneer, but Tom paid his chief attention to her for all that.

Ten years have passed by. Tom is a young merchant, bold, enterprising and successful. Mary Somers is his wife, and Mr. Stoddard, happy in their love and respect, lives with them. The Davenports are proud of their connection with their once despised poor relation, and thankfully accept her invitations. Imogene is unmarried and is likely to become a sour old maid. James Davenport is a clerk in the employ of Tom, through poverty being forced to work, very much to his disgust. Mr. and Mrs. Middleton still live. They have become more penurious than ever, but their opinion of Tom has changed. "My dear young friend, Tom Temple, once an inmate of my family," says Nathan, and his wife echoes it. How gold reveals the virtues of those about us! As for Tom, he has greatly improved. The bold, aggressive qualities which once made him a bully have been diverted to business, and have made him energetic and enterprising. So we leave him better than we found him, and with every prospect of a happy and prosperous career.

OVER AND UNDER.

BY CAPTAIN R. M. HAWTHORNE.



JUD JARVIS attained the eighteenth anniversary of his birth last November, and found it the most memorable day of his life.

He had been hunting in the woods along the upper Kanama river, had eaten his lunch, and now, finding himself a good six miles from home, began working his way back, hoping to gain a second shot at the stag that had dashed off at such speed that the youthful hunter was quickly left behind. Although deer were once plentiful in that section, they were now so scarce that it was quite an exploit for the best marksman to bring one down. Jud took his dog along, but just before starting the game, he skurried off on a false scent, and had not been heard or seen since.

The weather was unusually mild for the season, and Jud stood on the margin of the swift Kanama that was free from ice, debating whether he should cross in the dugout at his feet, in the hope of finding the game on

the other shore, or whether he should turn about and search for the animal on the same side of the stream.

"He ran straight for the water, and most likely swam across; I think he was hit hard and will not go far, but it is so late that I may not come up with him before dark—helloa!"

A crashing of the undergrowth on his left was followed by a bound that carried the stag a dozen feet into the water. Like a diver, he sank out of sight, even his spreading antlers disappearing from view, but almost instantly the noble head came up over a rod away, the wealth of prongs spreading above the wet snout like the disjointed rigging of a ship. He swam with such powerful strokes that a deep wave opened out behind him. He was fully fifty feet from shore, before Jud rallied from his amazement.

"I've got you this time, my fine fellow," he muttered, bringing his gun to his shoulder.

In the flurry of the moment, he did not recognize the meaning of a humming shriek which accompanied the report of his weapon. But the cartridge driven from his breech-loader was a defective one. There was a depression in one side of the lead which caused it to give out a quick, intense noise like that of a common nail when thrown in the peculiar manner known to all boys. Not only that, but the defect in the missile caused it to deflect just enough to make a clean miss.

Quite sure, though, that he had inflicted a mortal hurt, Jud was afraid the stag would reach land and get too far away to be overtaken before night. He shoved

the dugout into the water, threw his gun in, followed it himself, caught up the paddle and worked with might and main to overtake the game.

Swiftly as a stag can swim, he is no match for a man in a dugout. Jud gained fast, and, before the middle of the stream was reached, he was abreast of the deer, but a dozen yards or so above. He curved down toward him, and had passed half the intervening distance, when the fugitive wheeled about, or headed toward the shore he had left a few minutes before.

His protruding eyes, and the whiffing snort which sent a fine spray from his nostrils, proved that he saw his peril and was desperately swimming away from it.

Now was the time for another shot. Jud hastily pulled the lever to throw out the old shell and push a new cartridge into place; but every one knows the "obduracy of inanimate things" at such times. Something got out of order, and, with an impatient exclamation, he lowered his piece to adjust it.

Before he could do so, the angry snort that he had heard before sounded so close at his elbow that he looked around. That which he saw was startling indeed. The stag was plowing like a steam-tug through the water and coming straight for the boat. His fierce front left no doubt of his earnestness, and Jud Jarvis awoke to the fact that while he was hunting the stag, the stag had turned about to hunt him.

The movement was so unexpected that the usually clear-headed youth was thrown into a panic. His gun could not be fired until the hitch was removed, and

believing he had no time to do that, he plunged overboard.

In that trying moment, Jud could not forget the valuable rifle in his hand. He meant to hold fast to that, come what might. He was a strong swimmer, and he went down until one foot touched the pebbly bottom. Immediately he gave a light spring, which sent him upward like a cork. Flirting the water from his eyes he looked about him.

The dugout almost touched his nose, so that for the moment he saw nothing of the stag. If the latter had struck the craft with his antlers he had failed to overturn it.

"I may as well make some use of you," reflected Jud, catching hold of the gunwale with one hand, and placing his rifle within; "I think the gun will be as safe there as anywhere."

He swam to the stern with the intention of climbing into the rude craft, when the stag came into view. He was moving around the boat, intently looking for the youth that had dared to shoot at him. With a sagacity hardly to be expected, he discerned the guilty from the innocent, and, instead of making a blind assault upon the dugout, he waited for the hunter to reappear. When he did so, he gave him his undivided attention.

Jud's panic was gone. His hands were free and he was afraid of no animal in the water. The current was cold, for the autumn was well along, but he cared nothing for that. He "trod water" until the bouquet of prongs was almost upon him. He did not fear them,

for, as is well known, the most effectual weapons of the deer species at certain times are his fore feet. Rearing on his hind legs, he brings his forward hoofs close together, the fronts turned down so that they become a couple of joined knives, capable of inflicting a frightful gash. The stag of course appeals to his antlers, and they are formidable in the way of defense, but when his sharp hoofs will serve him better, he is quick to use them.

It was these hoofs that Jarvis feared. He was in front of them, and their movement while swimming was such as to gouge his chest if he should be struck. Therefore, at the right moment, he dived under the stag.

Touching bottom as before, Jud opened his eyes and looked toward the sky. The water was of such crystalline clearness that, when paddling along, he could see the pebbly bed, except in the very deepest portion. He had subjected his eyes, however, to a most trying ordeal. The contact of the water with the sensitive organs caused a smarting sensation, and the former assumed a yellow tinge which interfered with his vision.

But he was blessed with unusually strong eyes, and when he looked up he saw the stag over his head. He seemed to be a huge, grotesque creature walking through the translucent atmosphere on his hind legs. His body was almost erect, and the swiftly moving legs churned the water, as if they were beating the air.

The fact that he hardly shifted his position showed that he was holding himself almost stationary until his

foe should reappear. He had turned upon his persecutor, and was waiting to destroy him.

The latter now did a clever thing. He came up so noiselessly that the brute did not hear him. He had to blink pretty hard to clear the moisture from his smarting eyes, but when he did so, it was as he expected; he was within six feet of the game, but directly behind him. The dugout was fifty feet down stream.

One long stroke carried Jud across the space. The stag heard the soft swash, and possibly caught sight of the figure stealing upon him, but, before he could turn his head, each hand grasped an antler with iron grip.

"Now, swim, old fellow, but you've got to take me along."

It was the turn of the stag to fall into a panic. He flirled his head and whirled round and round in his effort to dislodge the incubus, but he could not do so. Jud laughed at the discomforture of the animal.

"You're doing quite well, but not so well as you think you can do."

Jud's expectation was that the stag would tire himself out, and then, finding he could not free himself of his load, would make for shore again. The youth meant to let go as soon as land was reached. No doubt by that time the animal would be glad enough to make off. He would be likely to escape altogether, for he certainly showed no signs of being badly wounded, if indeed he had been hit at all. If he should turn to assail Jud, after the latter let go his horns, he could easily avoid him in the water.

It looked as if Jud's theory was to be verified, for, after a few blind circlings, the stag, with a disgusted sniff, made for the bank toward which he had headed on entering the river.

Peering through the little forest of antlers in front, the lad noticed that the trees along the shore were sweeping backward with amazing velocity; then he caught a roar, rapidly swelling into a deep boom, and gazing to the left, he saw the dugout bowing, dancing and turning on its own center in a cloud of rising mist. It was on the very point of plunging over the falls.

Jud thought no more of the stag. Unless he could reach shore within a few seconds, he must follow the dugout or be drowned. Releasing the antlers, he dropped to the bottom of the river, impelled to do so by a curious hope that he would thus gain a chance to help himself along.

The depth was nearly as great as in the middle of the stream. He tried to catch hold of the stony bottom, but it glided so swiftly from his grasp that he felt the pain of the friction. The slight reaction sent him upward again, and he struggled fiercely to reach shore. He had about the same distance to travel as the stag, but the latter was a rod further down stream.

The youth strove as only one can who is striving for his life, but he was closer to the falls than he was to land, and he quickly saw that nothing could save him from going over. To struggle longer could only exhaust his strength without giving him any advantage. With great coolness, he turned to the left, so as to face the falls, and braced himself for the ordeal.

"I have never heard whether any one can go over them and live to tell of it, but the question will be settled in the next two minutes."

The river where it poured over the rocks was compressed into a volume less than a hundred feet in width. The mass of water was ten feet in depth, and the descent was three times as great. The narrowing of the stream gave it great velocity, and the churning of the enormous mass at the base sent up continual clouds of mist, which, when penetrated by the sun's rays, showed a beautiful rainbow.

At the point where Jud put out in a boat, it was safe to paddle across, but he had been so absorbed in his hunt for the stag, that he forgot all about the falls until it was too late to extricate himself.

Curious thoughts often come to a person when in such extremity. Jud saw the dugout bobbing up and down like the cork of a fishing line, until it vanished from sight. He wondered how many times it would turn over, and whether it was possible for it to keep upright, and in case it was not capsized what would become of his fine rifle? If that were saved, into whose hands would it fall? What did the stag think of the situation, and did he appreciate what zanies he and Jud had made of themselves in their eagerness to destroy each other? How delicately beautiful was the faint rainbow spanning the mist! Would his father and mother understand the means by which he had lost his life? He was their only child, and the pang of sorrow which pierced his heart was because he knew they would never recover from their grief over his loss.

Other singular fancies were crowding upon him, but he was now so close to the falls that they occupied all his thoughts. He saw that the stag was struggling with that blind instinct which all animals show in the extremity of peril. His savage efforts had carried him a little closer to shore, but it availed nothing, and he swept toward the falls broadside on. By some mischance that can hardly be understood, the animal, on the very rim of the overflow, turned on his back, after the manner of a horse when he lies down to roll. The legs were seen for an instant sawing the air, and then hoofs, body, and antlers, were mixed in one general swirl and over they went.

Jud Jarvis was thrilled, as he shot with arrowy swift-ness toward the battle of the waters. He uttered the same prayer that he had uttered night and morning since his infancy, and compressing his lips, and drawing a deep inspiration, bravely awaited the issue.

Just then it seemed to him that the vast bulk of water, in which he hung suspended, had become motionless, and the rocky wall below was fighting its way up current with a vicious fury that caused all the turmoil; then the rushing Kanama, accepting the challenge, leaped at the rocks to beat them back. But the lad was borne forward with a dizzying sweep, as if hauled through mid-air, and then he shot downward, into the smothering foam and shivering water, amid a war like that of thousands of cannon.

Through it all Jud never lost consciousness, nor his presence of mind. He held his breath until it seemed

his lungs must burst. He knew that the continual hammering of the waters at the base of the falls had worn a cavity of great depth, to the bottom of which he had been carried by the mountainous mass above. But this had to hurry out to make room for that which was forever rushing after it, and he went with it.

He felt faint and strange, and there was one moment when a singular ringing in his ears and a stranglingsensation warned him that he was "on the line," and that one step more meant unconsciousness, to be quickly followed by death. By a mighty effort, however, he rallied, and retained command of himself.

"A man *can* go over these falls and live to tell of it," he thought; "and that's what I am going to do."

The gasp which he gave brought the cool, life-giving air to his lungs, and the staring eyes saw that though the water was still agitated, the yeasty foam was so small a portion that he could support himself. It was becoming clearer every minute, and the falls were rapidly receding behind him.

After drifting several rods, Jud caught sight of the dugout, almost within reach.

"And it is right side up!" he exclaimed, with delight; "can it be—I shall soon know."

A few strokes carried him to the hollowed out log, which was not riding so high as when he saw it above the falls. Peeping over the gunwales he observed that it was so nearly full of water that it was floating because of the buoyancy of the log itself. A shout of delight escaped him when he saw his rifle lying in the water at

the bottom. By a run of good fortune that could hardly happen again, it was saved to him.

Holding the stern with one hand, Jud began working the boat toward shore. The water rapidly became calmer, and the task was not difficult.

"I wonder how the stag made out," he said, as the nose of the dugout struck land; "he went over in a style of his own, and I am afraid— Well, if that doesn't beat everything!"

At that very moment the body of the stag heaved up from the water, and he walked out not more than twenty feet away. As soon as he was clear of the river he stopped, lowered his head, and a sort of earthquake shook his whole system, the drops of water flying in a shower from every part of his body. Having flirled off most of the moisture, he slowly turned halfway round, and surveyed the dripping biped, as if seeking to find out whether he was the young man who was responsible for this wholesale overturning of things.

Meanwhile, Jud was doing his utmost to get his rifle in shape for service. He gave as much attention to the stag as to his weapon. In case the brute charged before the youth was ready, he meant to take to the stream again, for he had already proven that he was safe there.

The cartridges had kept dry in their waterproof chamber, and the slight disarrangement was quickly made right. The barrel was freed from most of the moisture, and the weapon was again ready for service. Jud had missed his two previous shots, but he was confident it could not happen again. The game was now his own.

Possibly the stag could not satisfy himself as to the identity of the youth, for after a prolonged stare he swung back his head and slouched off toward the woods. Jud raised his breech-loader and took careful aim at the head held so proudly aloft. The finger was pressing the trigger, when the rifle was lowered again.

“We’ll call it square; you’ve saved your life; you may go; good-by!”

A STRANGE CRAFT.

BY GEOFFREY RANDOLPH.



Y young friends Jim and Joe Allison are emphatic in declaring that they will never, never forget their adventure in Florida last summer. When you come to learn the particulars, I am sure you will take the same view of it that they do.

Jim and Joe are brothers, the first sixteen and the second fourteen years old. Last autumn they came to the north to attend school, and perhaps some of the readers of boys' papers have made their acquaintance. If so, you will agree with me that they are bright, manly fellows, who, if their lives are spared, will become useful and popular citizens.

The father of the Allison boys was an officer of the Confederacy. With the wreck of a once handsome fortune, he went back to his old home in Florida, after the close of the war. He was still a young man, and had been fortunate enough to go through the whole

“unpleasantness” without a scratch. He married an estimable lady from the north, who, in addition to her many fine qualities, had the not objectionable one of considerable wealth. So it came about that Colonel Allison bought a fine orange plantation in the land of flowers, and it was there that his daughter and two sons were born.

Like the boys of the south and west, Jim and Joe were accustomed to horses, guns and roughing it from earliest boyhood, though rather curiously neither of them could swim a stroke. They spent many an hour in the pulseless pine forests, in the oozy swamps and the dry barrens, finding enjoyment and sport where you and I would see nothing but wretchedness.

Only a few weeks before they went to the north they engaged in the memorable hunt of which I am going to tell you. Suspecting that it would be the last one they would be able to have together for a long time (for they were busy with their preparations for leaving home), they agreed to make it a thorough one so far as it was in their power to do so.

They told their parents not to be anxious if they saw nothing of them for two or three days, for they meant to go a long distance up the St. John's and had resolved not to come back until they had obtained some experience worth the telling.

An hour later the boys had entered their dugout, in which they put up a sail, and with a mild but favoring breeze they moved at a fair rate up the river, which is probably the most widely known of any in Florida.

They were provided with a substantial lunch, for though professional sportsmen might have scorned to make a provision that implied their own lack of skill, the brothers had no compunctions in the matter.

There was nothing in the woods that could take the place of Dinah's corn cake, nor was there any game which the boys could prepare by the camp fire to be compared to the cold roast chicken which the same skillful cook took such pains to make ready for them. So, in going this long hunt, the boys did not mean to place any dependence on their guns for food.

It was quite early in the morning when they started. The St. John's, with its shores sometimes wooded, and often low and marshy, wound in and out through the forest, but the current was sluggish, and it was not a difficult task to paddle the light dugout.

Now and then the youths took a shot at some of the game of which they caught a glimpse along the shore. It was not yet noon when they met a steamer, whose sputtering wheel at the stern churned the water into muddy foam, and whose deck was filled with excursionists. Many of these waved their handkerchiefs at the boys, who returned the salute.

By and by Jim remarked that if they meant to have a genuine old-fashioned hunt, they would have to leave the main river, where they met too many people. So they turned up the next tributary they saw.

Jim used the paddle until tired, and then Joe did the same. By this time it was high noon, and observing a small island ahead they agreed to make a landing there

and take lunch. They could have done this just as well in the boat, but they had been in their cramped posture so long that they wanted to "stretch their legs."

The island on which they landed was a small one, being no more than a hundred feet in length, and its widest portion was less than half of that. The middle was perhaps three or four feet above the level of the water, so that the patch of land resembled one of those patent door mats, which, being raised in the center, shed all the water that falls upon them.

There was not a particle of vegetation on the island—not so much even as a spear of grass. There were a few twigs and bits of limbs that had floated down and lodged against the upper point, but altogether there was not an armful.

It was of no concern to the boys that they found this strip of sand so uninviting, for they did not mean to stay there more than an hour or two at the most. The sun was hot, and they would have enjoyed the luxury of stretching beneath some shady tree; but since that was out of the question they did not bemoan it. The umbrella which they had brought answered very well as a substitute. Its long handle was jammed into the sand near the middle of the island, and its shade almost sheltered their bodies.

Protected in this fashion, they brought forth their big lunch basket, and fell to with an appetite such as I trust all of you possess.

In making their way to the camping site, as it may

be called, Jim Allison carried the umbrella and lunch basket. More from habit than anything else Joe brought the rifles with him. He did not dream that any necessity would arise for their use, but had some idea that he might lie under the shade of his umbrella, and pick off something in the river or along shore.

The division of the stream, produced originally by the sandy bar or island, caused the curving water to wear away the main shores on either side, until the river at that portion took upon itself the character of a lake or lagoon. From the island to either bank was a distance of fully two hundred yards, so that it would have taken good marksmanship on the part of the boys to bring down anything on the main land.

One peculiarity had been noted by both. The region seemed to be a favorite one with alligators. They could be seen basking in the sun along the banks, with here and there a snout moving lazily over the water in quest of prey. They were not liable to disturb the boys so long as they remained in the dugout, but if by some chance they should be capsized among a school of them, it might have gone ill with our young friends.

"I think," remarked Jim, speaking as well as he could with his mouth full of corn cake, "that after ascending a few miles further we'll land and take to the woods."

"Not a bad idea," spluttered Joe, from behind the cold chicken that threatened to suffocate him; "we can build a fire and sleep in the woods to-night; then we'll have all day to-morrow for the hunt, and can go home the next day."

"Yes; there isn't much in this sort of business; we must have a time that we can tell the boys about when we go up north."

Just then the speaker happened to look down stream, and noticed a boat that appeared to be approaching.

"Who can that be?" he asked in astonishment.

"My gracious!" gasped Joe, leaping to his feet, "*it is our dugout!*"

Such was the fact. They had left it drawn up so slightly on the shingle, that it had swung loose, and was already a hundred feet below the island.

The astounded lads looked in each other's face, speechless for a full minute. Well might they ask themselves what should be done, for you will bear in mind that neither of them knew how to swim, that they were in a lonely region where they could not be certain of any person passing for days or weeks, and that there was nothing on the island from which anything in the nature of a raft or float could be constructed.

The boys were plucky, and had either one of them known how to swim, he could have helped the other to the main land, and they would have considered the adventure of a nature that need cause little misgiving. They concluded that the only thing to be done was to fire their guns and shout, in the faint hope of attracting the attention of some one within call.

Accordingly, they discharged their rifles, and yelled and whistled until the sun sank in the west, but without the slightest evidence of success.

As the day advanced, the alligators showed more signs

of life. They swam back and forth in the river, and at one or two points a number engaged in a fierce fight, causing no little splashing and turmoil in the water. Occasionally one of them would run his hideous snout against the island, but they did nothing more than stare at the youngsters, when they whirled about and swam into deep water again.

While the brothers had no special fear of these huge reptiles, they were not without misgiving, for they well knew that they occasionally attacked persons. They kept close watch, therefore, and it was well that they did.

Just as the sun was sinking, and while the river glowed with the yellow, horizontal rays, they were startled by the approach of the largest alligator on which they had ever looked. They did not see him until he was close to the island, and indeed in the act of leaving the water and coming toward them. He was fully eighteen feet long, and there could be no doubt that he meant to attack the boys. His size, age, and appetite, would not permit him to stop at trifles.

"I'll take the right eye," said Jim.

"And I the left," said Joe in an undertone.

The boys had cast aside their umbrella, and kneeling on one knee they took careful aim at the monster. Like the patriots at Bunker Hill, they waited until they saw the whites of the enemy's eyes, and then they fired together.

The distance was short, and the aim so true, that either bullet would have proved fatal. As it was, the

alligator, with a horrible whiffing snort, swung spasmodically about, clawed the sand into showers, and then died, as any creature must whose brain has been bored through by two leaden pellets.

That was a dismal night to Jim and Joe. They feared that the other reptiles would come upon the island to attack the slain monarch, in which case they were likely to give some unpleasant attention to the boys. But fortunately the saurians did not do so, and when the sun rose in the morning, matters may be said to have been *in statu quo*.

The main suffering of the boys was for water. They had brought a bottle with them, but that was exhausted on the first day, and they waited until they were extremely thirsty before drinking from the muddy current that swept sluggishly by.

By noon, they began to feel serious alarm. They had used up nearly all their ammunition, and had shouted and yelled till their heads ached and their voices were husky. There were no more signs of any one else being in the solitude than there would have been in the middle of Sahara.

Disconsolate Joe was leaning on his elbow under the shade of the umbrella, wondering how many days it would be before their parents would miss them, how many weeks before the party of search would set out, and how many months before their remains would be found bleaching upon the sandy island—that is, provided the alligators did not make a feast upon them.

He happened to be looking at the huge carcass of the

reptile, when he noticed that beneath the flaming heat it was distended to double its natural size. It was a frightful looking sight indeed.

"Jim," said he, turning to his brother, "that carcass is swollen enough to float like a cork."

"Let's try it then," said he, brightening up; "the other alligators are asleep, and it's the best hour out of the twenty-four."

Inspired by the new thought, they ran to the bloated mass and made the attempt to get it into the water. It was an exhausting task, and they could not have moved it far, but by great labor they succeeded in swinging it into the current. It proved to be wonderfully buoyant, and when the boys perched themselves upon the back their combined weight did not sink it more than half under water.

Their hearts throbbed fast when they found themselves at last floating with the current. They were not without dread that the scent of the carcass would bring others to the spot, but the voyage of the singular boat was so quiet that the siesta of the other alligators was not disturbed. They floated down stream until, at a bend in the river, they swung so close to land that they saw the water was shallow; and springing off they waded ashore.

Jim and Joe discovered nothing of their dugout, and were obliged to make their way down to the St. John's, where they were fortunate enough to hail a passing steamer, which landed them near their home.



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